TWELVE SERMONS

BY

THE REV. H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

CANON OF ST. PAUL'S.

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TWELVE

SERMONS

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,

AND

Before the University of Oxford.

BY THE REV.

HENRY PARRY LIDDON,

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Canon of St. Paul's, and Professor of Exegesis, Oxford.

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Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis, University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

On Sunday Afternoon, December 3, 1871.

"And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"—St. Matthew xxi., 10.

It seems very natural to us, my brethren, to ask, why the account of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday should be read as the Gospel for Advent Sunday? At first sight it looks very like a displacement of the Gospel history, for on Advent Sunday we are thinking of the two extreme points, if we may so term them, of the relationship which the Lord Jesus bears to us, the one of His coming to take our nature upon Him eighteen centuries and a half ago, and the other when He shall come to judge us hereafter; when lo! we suddenly find ourselves in the very midst of His earthly life, at nothing less than its crisis, when He has just wrought His greatest recorded miracle, and is consciously on His way to die. What, then, we feel inclined to ask, is the connection between this entry into Jerusalem and Christ's advent, whether on the occasion of His taking our nature upon Himself, or His still future advent, in the

clouds of heaven as Judge of the quick and the dead? Might it not have been better, we may ask, as is the case in some of the Churches of Christendom, to have chosen the Gospel for to-day from some passage in which our Lord describes His second coming, such for instance, as the Gospel for Sunday next? This, brethren, is what some of *us* may think, but these old Liturgical arrangements were made by people who knew very well what they were about. They have been continued to our day because they have been found by the experience of some thirteen or fourteen centuries, to have a deep lesson for the human soul. They are not often interfered with now without loss, and it may be questioned whether we have in this generation the men to touch up the works of the great masters of the Christian life; whether we can make the attempt even on the small scale of our new Lectionaries and Revised Prayer Book, without stumbling into some crude mistakes, which another age will criticise, more or less sharply and justly, by the light of a deeper mastery of spiritual truth.

This Gospel is chosen because it brings before us *two* great truths; not only that of the first coming of our Divine Saviour into the world, but of His coming to the judgment. Passages of Scripture describing either of these momentous events would be obviously appropriate, but to do justice to the solemn time upon which we enter to-day, we require to keep these two truths clearly before the eye of the soul. Therefore it is that we have a portion of Gospel history in which these two truths meet; the repetition, as it were, of our Lord's first coming to His own, when His own received Him not; and an anticipation of His coming at the judgment, when every eye shall see Him. For His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was certainly an act of grace. It was giving those who had previously rejected Him a last opportunity of embracing His Gospel, of learning who and what He was and what He had to teach, and what He, and He alone could do for those who would listen to Him to any real purpose. The offering He made for His own countrymen at large, by consenting to be born of a Jewish mother and under the Law, and for the sake of us and all mankind, by taking our nature upon Himself and coming among us as one of ourselves, He repeats on a smaller scale, but, if we may so put it, in an intenser

way, by this entry into Jerusalem. His entry was, indeed, a day of grace to the doomed City, it was the supreme opportunity upon which previous errors and perversities might be redeemed once for all by the free acceptance of His pardon. It was to Jerusalem, what the dawn of the Nativity had been to the world at large, a day of grace upon which God's blessed Son shewed the light of His countenance, and was merciful yet once more to the people of His ancient choice.

But if it was a day of grace, it was also a day of judgment. Now "judgment" means, in the sacred language of the Bible, separation. Separation is the first step in the formation of a judgment. It is so in the things of this world. To judge of the various degrees of merit of two things, is to separate this from that; to criticise any production in art and literature—to say that this or that statue, or painting, or book belongs to the class having this or that degree of excellence, is to separate them. To criticise is to separate. To award prizes in a school, is to separate those who gain from those who lose. To deliver a verdict in a court of Justice, is to separate the guilty from the innocent. To separate is the first step in any process of judgment, and separation was the order of the day when our Lord entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; and, when He seemed at least, about to be put upon His trial, He was in reality fulfilling the office of the Judge, and His seeming judges, were in fact in the dock before His tribunal. They it was, who were of their own free will and motion separating themselves instinctively at His approach into their different classes; taking their sides almost involuntarily; writing themselves down upon the eternal record as His enemies or His worshippers. It was, if ever there was one, a day of judgment; only the Judge was not in His robes, and the parties before Him had for the moment scrambled on to the material seat of judgment, and were apparently those who ought to speak.

The point. however, upon which St. Matthew insists is that when Christ entered Jerusalem, "All the city was moved." Observe that he says "all the city." It would, I submit, be no ordinary cause which produced that effect. It is comparatively easy to interest a single class, a coterie of thinkers, or a political party. Local interests will move those who live in particular districts; mercantile interests, those who are engaged in particular

lines of business; literary interests, those who are devoted to special departments of study; political interests, those who are engaged in public life, or who have devoted time and thought to the study of public questions. But what is the sort of interest that can move all ages, all classes, all characters, in a great and varied community? Certainly we may have seen something of the kind, when a great sorrow, such as the death of a popular prince, or minister, or a great national loss, such as a defeat in war, or a deadly pestilence, or a famine, or some outbreak of revolutionary violence, or some vast conflagration falls upon the capital, or the country. Yet even in these rare cases, the interest is distributed unequally. The loss, or at least the *sense* of loss, falls with a very varying weight of incidence upon different classes of persons. There are always some, who have not much to lose, or who cannot feel much, and who are at least tranquil amid the prevailing agitation.

That which moves the whole community to its very depths is that which touches man as *man*. Not man as the capitalist; not man as the citizen, or the subject; not man as belonging to this profession or to that; not as one of this class or that; but Man as a being who has a conscience, and a consciousness of his mighty destiny; who knows that he is here but for a few years at most, and that during those few years he is here upon his trial; who feels the solemnity of his position press on his very soul; who has a perpetual presentiment of coming death and of the world which lies beyond it. When Jesus entered Jerusalem "all the city was moved," because Jesus, by His very presence and bearing, spoke to the souls of all; the power of His presence was felt in different ways, but it was felt universally. The movement which it created was very far from being always a a movement in the right direction. Truth is too strong to be without effect of some kind; but then truth repels where it does not attract; it exacts either the homage of love, or it will, at least, gain the negative homage of animosity. The remarkable circumstance at Jerusalem, according to St. Matthew, is that there was no class of persons who professed to be altogether indifferent. We know how large a class of persons in different stations of society in this city of London make this melancholy sort of profession. They profess really—they tell you so—

not to care about Religion. They stand outside it with folded arms, occupying themselves with other matters and leaving, as they say, all such things to those who have a taste for Religion, and who choose to follow it out as they please. Whether at bottom they are really indifferent; whether, in fact, such a thing as *bonâ fide* indifference on the part of any intelligent human being towards religion is possible, may be very fairly questioned. It is, of course, possible enough to be unconcerned about a subject the claims of which have never yet, in their breadth and height, been fairly brought before you; but when this has been once done, the profession of indifference is generally a veil for a thinly disguised opposition. Jerusalem, at any rate, was small enough in point of population for everybody living in it to know something of the significance of Christ's entry, and we may without difficulty catalogue briefly the elements of which the movement, which that entry created, was made up.

We may take it for granted, first of all, that the main element in the general excitement would be curiosity. Crowds of pilgrims were arriving by their caravans day by day to the great Festival, bringing with them, from Galilee, reports of the miracles which Jesus had performed in the north of Palestine; of the startling nature of His teaching; of the vast influence which He had exerted amongst the straightforward people of the northern provinces. "Jesus Christ, the prophet of Galilee," was already a name known more or less to every inhabitant of Syria who took any interest whatever in the questions of the day; and there were, as was to be expected, wild stories handed about, such as gather round every distinguished name; stories which are produced by and which stimulate the general excitement. Nor was Jesus unknown in Jerusalem itself. Only in the preceding September, at the Feast of Tabernacles, He had worked a miracle upon the man who was born blind, which had been the subject of special and searching investigation before the Committee of the Great Council, the Sanhedrim. That inquiry had notoriously failed to shake the evidence of the person who had been its subject. After a short journey into Galilee, Christ had again appeared in Jerusalem, at the end of December, during the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, when an attempt had been been made upon His life in consequence of His clear assertion of a

claim to be Divine; and since that date an event had occurred which had roused the feelings of the capital to the highest pitch. At the village of Bethany, not quite three quarters-of-an-hour's walk from the City gate, and only just beyond the brow of the hill known as the Mount of Olives, He had raised from the dead, nay—from the very putrefaction of the tomb—the body of Lazarus, a member of a well-known family in Bethany. This miracle had excited the greatest attention, the greatest hostility, and when, three days before the Passover, on His return to Bethany, Jesus was, as it would seem by way of acknowledgment, entertained by the villagers at the house of Simon the Leper, St. John says that a large number of Jews came out of the City expressly to see Lazarus, who was present at the entertainment, as one who had returned to his family, not from a distant colony, but from that mysterious world, of which, and from which, we can learn so little, while we yearn to know so much. "Much people of the Jews, therefore, knew that He was there, and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead."

Much of the interest which is felt on the subject of Religion in all ages belongs, in one way or other to the interest of *curiosity*. A man of moderate intelligence, if he is alive to the nature and strength of the influences which, whether rightly or wrongly, do as a matter of fact govern numbers of human lives, must feel that Religion is a subject well worth his careful attention. He may himself know, practically at least, very little, or nothing, about its blessedness and its power; he may be wanting in the moral, the spiritual sympathies which alone enable us to understand what it is, and to know it as at once the purest passion and the highest virtue of which man is capable; and yet if in ever so slight a degree, he has the eye of a statesman, he must see that Religion is a mighty power swaying the minds, purifying the affections and invigorating the wills of millions of men, and as such at least, it is a most worthy subject for careful enquiry. At this very day, read the newspapers or listen to the ordinary current of conversation, and consider how much of the interest which is displayed on the subject of religion is the interest of curiosity. Why religious people act as they do act? What in the world can it be that induces them? How did they ever come to have

such convictions? Who are the persons, and what are the books, and what the states of feeling which influence them now? All this moves the curiosity of the intelligent world. The world stands outside the sacred Temple, but it strains its eyesight very hard indeed in order to see as much of the interior as it possibly can, through the windows or the half-opened doors. If indeed, Religion is dormant; if the Church is weighed down by a spirit of deadly lethargy, public curiosity takes little heed of it, except in the way of an occasional expression of languid and half kindly contempt. But when life and activity return there is a change. In George the Third's time, the public prints of this country scarcely alluded to religion in any way, except as a sort of decoration of the body politic which came out into view on state occasions. We have but to read the newspapers of our own day, whatever be their politics or their principles, to appreciate the vastness of the change. Jesus has come into the city indeed, in the two great religious movements which have taken place in this century; and, for good or for evil, from one motive or another, but very largely indeed from a curious wish to know what it is all about—"all the city is moved."

Now the second element in the excitement referred to at Jerusalem was assuredly, fear.

The ruling sect of the Pharisees, which largely, although by no means entirely, influenced the conduct and opinions of the priesthood, was alarmed at the moral influence of Jesus. The Pharisees felt that between them and Jesus there could be nothing less than a fundamental opposition. They instinctively felt that in the long run He must be stronger than they, therefore they were prepared to persecute Him to the death. They had actually issued a public notice that information might be given as to His residence, with a view of arresting Him, and the Herodians who viewed the successes of Jesus as likely to interfere with their political plans, did in one thing agree altogether with the Pharisees, namely, that there was good reason for their being alarmed. Fear, my brethren, is a form of envy. Fear tends to be very practical indeed. Irrational fear soon becomes cruel if only it has arms in its hands. Persecution is more frequently the resource of the timid than the counsel of the wise and the strong. To persecute is to make a public confession of weakness.

In rare cases persecution may succeed,—but only upon one condition—that condition being that it utterly exterminates its victims. But still you must take an extraordinary interest in a Religion, to persecute it, and the Pharisees, who hated the religious teaching of Jesus, and the Herodians, who thought it would injure their cherished schemes of politics, eyed His entry into Jerusalem with sincere interest; the interest of sincere anxiety. In all ages this has been the case. Is not much of the interest that is taken in religion at the present day dictated in some respects by fear? Men who are not religious themselves, but who have seen the vast power of Religion upon the minds of those around them fear religion, just as savages are said to suspect witchcraft in any new apparatus or scientific discovery. Thus it was that the Jews said that our Lord had a devil. Thus it was that St. Paul was accused in Galatia of a want of straightforwardness. When men do not understand the real secret of the power which Religion exerts over sincere and purified hearts, they go about to invent an imaginary one. In truth, they are frightened, and the violence of their language when they have no power, and of their acts when they have, is the measure of their alarm.

The third element in the general excitement alluded to in the text is the imitative habit which influences so many, in all ages and countries. There are always many people who are most anxious to keep pace with the modern enthusiasm, not because it is the best, but because it is the most modern. They keep a stock of sympathy always on hand, ready to be lavished upon any promising eccentricity that may present itself, or that may be sufficiently recognized by persons to whose opinions they attribute weight. They seem always sensitively afraid of being behind the Age; behind its very latest phase of fashionable opinion. They do not originate these novelties themselves, but they are always at the disposal of those who do. Jerusalem would have contained many such; indeed, that it must have contained them is plain, if we compare the scene of the great entry into the City, with that other scene at the foot of the Cross. Many a man must have called out "Crucify!" on the Friday, who had cried "Hosanna!" on the previous Sunday, and in each case only because the majority of people whom he saw about

him on those two days respectively did the like. There is no doubt, however, that imitative religion is capable of doing a great deal of work. It is far better than no interest in religion at all. It may always by God's grace lead on to something much deeper and more solid than itself. But do not let us mistake it. That sort of interest is only skin deep; it has no sort of root in the soul. It belongs altogether to the ephemeral creations of the social atmosphere. It will not stand a strain or a shock; it dies when the occasion or the influence which provoked it is gone. Like other fashions, it rises, it has its day, it wanes, it expires, and then the men who have gone through it imagine they have made a real trial of Religion; have discovered its weakness, and as they say, "seen through it" for themselves, and that now they are really in a position to speak upon the subject from their personal experience. But alas! they have been after all merely swept away by a current that was too strong for them. They have been using religious language, and going through religious acts, and trying hard to fan themselves up into a certain phase of religious fervour, whereas they have all the time in stern reality merely been carried down by a strong social tide of Opinion which has swept them helplessly before it. They have allowed themselves to be drifted away by it from day to day, and from hour to hour, because they did not wish to appear wanting in the supposed proprieties of the position. The wonder would have been that their interest had lasted longer; still while it did last it was a *bonâ fide* interest. It contributed, perhaps, some real ingredients to this or that movement of the day. What would it be worth on their death-beds—what would it be worth beyond—is another question.

These, then, were the three principal elements of the agitation at Jerusalem on the day of Christ's entry into the city—Curiosity, Fear, and Imitativeness. But curiosity is only aroused when religion has exercised some power, at least over the persons who experience it. Hostility to religion is only possible when it is felt to be a real influence, in at least *some* quarters; shaping the principles, moulding the habits, and determining the lines of a man's conduct.

Nor do the imitative care to follow any who are not themselves really moved. So it would be, no doubt, on the day of the great

entry into the City. There was an inner circle around our Lord consisting of disciples from Galilee, and some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had witnessed His wondrous deeds and spoken of what they had seen and heard, they had opened their understandings to the force and range of Christ's teaching, and their hearts to the contemplation of the beauty of His human character; and putting all these things together—the impression made upon them by His faultless life; by a teaching that carried with it its own internal evidence of superhuman origin; by a series of miracles which ratified the anticipations alike of the understanding and the heart—they believed Him. Whether their faith was as yet as clear and definite as St. John's, when he wrote his gospel half a century later, or as St. Paul's, when, at an earlier period, he wrote his great epistles, may very well be questioned. It was faith in process of growth, but, though it was not yet a faith strong enough to move social mountains, it was sufficiently developed to excite curiosity, apprehension, and imitation in the masses around. These men, though in point of numbers by far the weakest, were, by their moral force, much the strongest of the various elements which contributed to the movement of that eventful day.

Moral and spiritual strength has no more necessary relation to numbers, than our mental and intellectual power has to the size of our bodies. It belongs to a different order of being, in fact it often seems that mental energy is in an inverse ratio to physical power. This little company then, was the very heart and centre of all the multitude which gathered there on that day; the one permanent element in it. The curious would soon sate their curiosity when Jesus had declared Himself frankly in the Temple. The hostile would postpone their vengeance in presence of the conviction that, to attempt its gratification, would ensure immediate defeat. The imitative would cease to imitate when imitation became dangerous. And, indeed, during the dark hours of His Passion, a cloud would, no doubt, pass over the faith of the small and devoted band who had united themselves to Jesus. But this would be but temporary. On the morning of the Resurrection, their faith would shine forth more brightly than before. They were the real moving power of that day; *there* stood, in fact, the secret germ of the future

Church. So it was then, my brethren, and so it has been since.

It is, I know, the fashion to treat this sort of language as a kind of conventional rhapsody, in which clergymen, from whatever motive, are apt to indulge in the pulpit; but in which, it is not to be supposed that they will command the assent of the laity, for the simple reason that there is nothing to correspond to their ecstasies in the world of fact. And yet, I ask, IS there nothing? Who has not heard, within the last week of the death of one of the greatest and noblest of contemporary Englishmen, Bishop Coleridge Patteson, who perished lately, by murderous hands, in one of the islands of the Pacific? Well, indeed, do I remember him—and there are others in this cathedral who share that memory—when, two-and-twenty years ago, he was in the full flush of his youthful manhood, commanding the admiration of his friends by those qualities which, in a young man, win our love most readily: by activity of body, as well as activity of mind; by geniality and large-heartedness; by all that is included in that most inclusive of qualities—generosity. Well do I remember how it was believed, even then, that beneath that simple, unaffected, unpretending exterior, there were deeper and nobler schemes of life in contemplation than those which are cherished by ordinary men, although, indeed, he was the very last man to make any unnecessary display of his religious convictions—of those still waters which ever run deepest in great souls. He went on, apparently, for years just like other people, but one day he astonished the world by leaving his home, his college, and his great university prospects, for a mission to the South Sea Islanders. Few men of our generation possess such a gift as his of mastering languages,—and, especially, of mastering the various shades and dialects of cognate languages. It is said that he knew perfectly, no less than thirty of those spoken by the different islanders, to whom he brought the glad tidings of the Gospel. These languages, too, were not fixed by any written literature, consequently they were in a perpetual state of change, numbers of words and expressions being varied with inconceivable caprice and rapidity at very short intervals of time. Bishop Patteson could follow could note these frequent variations. He not merely learned these strange tongues, but he kept pace with

their wayward eccentricities, and he did all this not to gain the applause of men, but for the sake of the higher work beyond it. He might, indeed, have aspired, with so rare a capacity, to almost any philological chair in the universities of Europe; and as it was the greatest living masters of the science of language—such as Professor Max Müller, for instance—were frequently in communication with him, and were not a little indebted to him for some of the fruits of his wonderful industry and researches. But he looked beyond any such renown as could be won at the seats of learning. He had higher aims in view. His fine philological tact was strewn, like the garments of the Disciples of old, in the pathway of the advancing Redeemer. He certainly did not fall away from that high companionship when it became perilous. He preserved his fidelity to his Master at the hall of judgment, and to the foot of the cross. And he has now reached his Jerusalem in true earnest. At the report of the dark deed of blood whereby so early an entrance has been opened for him into the Divine presence, a thrill runs through the hearts of his fellow-churchmen and fellow-countrymen, and even all—excepting our languid, easy, indifferent society—all that are capable of any moral interest at all are, in some sense moved. As of old, so now, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," and as we bend in tears over his early grave, we are lifted into a higher atmosphere, where the meaning of Life, and the meaning of Death as at most an incident which shall usher in some new phase of life, are read in other characters than those of our ordinary thoughts.

The beginning of a new period of time, dear brethren, is a natural one for asking ourselves solemn questions. On Advent Sunday we are face to face with the two comings of Christ. His first coming is a matter of history. He has been here in person, by His, spirit and His representatives, for nearly nineteen centuries. His second coming, so far as the date is concerned, is as much a matter of uncertainty now, as it was in the days of His Apostles. We cannot say, "Lo! here," or "Lo! there;" "It will be to-day," or "It will be a thousand years hence." We only know this—that He whose word shall not pass away, has said that He will come, and though He tarry, it is our business to wait for the appointed time, knowing full well that He will surely come. The question for us, then, is: When He does

come, whether it be in our lifetime, or whether it be at the last Judgment, will He find us among the curious, the hostile, the imitative, or the faithful? What is our personal relation towards His first Advent, and its momentous consequences now? During the few remaining years, or months, or weeks of our lives, do we hope to be interested in Religion only as we are interested in any political or popular question of the day? Are we secretly jealous of it? Is it merely a matter of fashion with us, in which we follow the guidance of others without any personal convictions of our own? Or have we, indeed, found that Jesus Christ is to us what no other is, or ever can be—our only real instructor in the highest Truth; our lawful and most indulgent Master, who has a right to the control of our secret wills, as well as to the homage of our outward actions; our Priest, as well as our Teacher and King, whose death—blessed be His mercy for it—was a sacrifice of unending efficacy and power; whose blood to the end of time, cleanses from all sin? They who know this, live, as it were, between the two Advents, rejoicing in the graces and the blessings of the first,—looking forward, if not without awe, yet certainly without terror, to the approach of the second. They it is who are to accompany Christ in His procession across the Ages, with their festal songs, strewing His path with the best offerings they can make, waving on high, amid a world which is curious, or angry, or imitative in turns, their palms of victory? In one or other of these classes we, too, must be, if we have seen something of Jesus even to-day. And we know that upon His entry into any soul all its faculties are moved. At the approach of this blessed and awful visitation—this advent for good or for evil, for our salvation or our perdition—the understanding, the will, the affections, the imagination, are all aroused. They must, perforce, in the last resort, blaspheme, if they have not the grace to adore. The religion of Curiosity, the religion of Imitation, soon resolve themselves into one of the two permanent attitudes of the soul towards its highest Object—love or aversion. Once more, dear brethren, how is it with us?

God grant that we may each of us answer that question honestly between this and Christmas; having our minds always fixed upon that first wondrous Advent, when the everlasting Son of God condescended, for our sakes, to be laid in the lowly manger of Bethlehem, and the eye of our faith constantly directed to that other and awful Advent, when the once-crucified Son of Man shall come again in His majesty and glory to judge the world

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis, University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1871.

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh."—1 Timothy iii, 16.

At length, my brethren, the Advent season has reached its close, and we are at Christmas eve. The period of expectation is over, and we are almost entering upon the early hours of that great and blessed festival on which the Christian Church keeps the birthday of her Founder; the day upon which He whom Christendom names the Saviour of the world was born of a human mother and entered this world to take His place among the things and scenes of Time. The Apostle's words to Timothy put before us forcibly and concisely the great master-truth which gives Christmas its meaning; "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." It is not the birthday of a mere Sage and Philanthropist, which we celebrate to-morrow. That might be in itself reasonable and natural enough; but Christmas means much more than that. Christmas means the entrance into the human world of One who was at once its Architect and its Judge, under conditions which made Him the peer of the poorest and youngest amongst us. It is the introduction of a new principle of life into humanity which we thus commemorate. It is in fact nothing less than a new starting point in the world's history. It is the opening of a new fountain of salvation for man, unknown to him before.

Now, the words "God was manifest in the flesh," are translated from a sentence the exact meaning of which is doubtful, and therefore this reading in the English version has been made the subject of some criticism. For in the original Greek manuscripts, the presence or absence of a single bar across the centre of a single letter, makes all the difference between reading the sentence "*God* was manifest in the flesh," or "*Who* was manifest in the flesh." It is clearly impossible here and now to enter upon a full and earnest discussion of the purely critical question, "What, according to the evidence of the ancient system of notation supplied by existing manuscripts, are the probabilities with regard to the insertion or excision of that particular bar across that particular letter?" Perhaps I ought not to conceal from you the conviction that there is not sufficient reason for changing the received version of the text so as to alter the rendering of our English Bible. But even if the reading "*God*" should be given up, and the reading "*Who*" be substituted for it, the change in the real drift and meaning of the sentence is not so great as is sometimes supposed. For it seems quite clear that whether this word be "God," or "Who," the Apostle is beginning a quotation, probably from some Christian hymn of the Apostolical period. Now, if the quotation begins with the word "God," it is obviously sufficiently complete in itself. If it begins with "Who," or even with "He who," it is evidently an incomplete fragment which refers to some person named in a preceding part of the hymn which is not quoted. To whom then does—to whom can—this "Who" refer? Here the word translated "manifest" will assist us. If the person spoken of in the text had no existence before his birth it would not have been natural to speak of him at his birth as being made "manifest in the flesh." When an infant is born in any of our families we do not say it is "made manifest in the flesh." Why not? Because though that infant has an immortal soul, distinct from its body, although linked with it, and in a certain very real sense, manifested through it, yet that soul had no existence *before* the formation and birth of the body of the infant; and we do not speak of a thing being "manifested" at the moment of its beginning to exist. The meaning of "manifestation," in all the languages of the world is not opposed to the idea of non-existence, but pre-supposes the idea of a hidden existence. Nay more "manifestation" obviously implies a previously unmanifested existence; and therefore the phrase "manifest in the flesh," would be inappropriate and absurd as applied to an ordinary human infant at its birth. We might as well speak of a house being "manifested" in stone or brick when it was built; or a railway embankment as being "manifested" when it was thrown up. Manifestation, observe,—at the risk of repetition let me be quite

clear—manifestation clearly implies the previous existence of the person or thing manifested. It marks a point in the history of that person or thing; the point at which he, or it, passes out of hidden into public and visible life. If then the text speaks of a "manifestation in the flesh," whether it terms the person so manifested "God," or whether it does not so name Him, it must, at least, be speaking of one who existed before this manifestation took place; or in other words before his birth. Apart then from all that follows in the later clauses of the quotation,—all that at every step rivets and intensifies the argument, this expression can be true only of that One Being who alone of all the persons named in Holy Scripture can be said to have existed before His birth into the world. The Hebrew and the Christian scriptures know nothing of any Indian theory of the transmigration of souls; and the true meaning of the words of the text is, that He who was before John the Baptist, and therefore greater than the Baptist; He whose glory Isaiah saw, not merely by prophetic anticipation, but in actual vision; He who was already existing *eternally* ere Abraham was; He who was with God before all things were made that were made; He, who was with God in the beginning; did at length, by being born of a woman, made under the law, make Himself manifest to the senses of men.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him; without Him was not anything made that was made." "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

God therefore was manifest in the flesh. What, let us reverently ask, were the limits—and what was the nature—of His manifestation? It is true for instance to say that God is manifested in nature; in the physical world; that His attributes shine forth through all His works around us. "The invisible things of Him, says the Apostle, are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Still more strikingly is God manifested in the human conscience; in that unchanging law of right and wrong which every man finds within himself, whether his sense of right and wrong be well informed and educated or not; and which speaks to him in the language, which cannot be misunderstood, of its Author. Who is He then who has thus lodged in the inmost sanctuary of every soul, an everpresent witness of His existence, a witness to His claims? That which may be known of God, in a state of nature, says St. Paul, is manifest to the Gentiles, for God hath shewed Himself unto them.

Once more, God is manifested in the course of events, or, as we should say in history. The play of His attributes may be

traced in its slow transitions and developments from one polity to another—from one ascendancy to another—from one civilization to another; and at its great crisis, when men dream that God is asleep, and that He is letting things take their course, and that all things continue as they were from the beginning o Creation, He, as the psalmist puts it, suddenly awakes as one out of sleep, and like a giant refreshed with wine. And His presence, His power, His justice, His love are felt to be penetrating and irradiating great contemporary events, and men cry out with the prophet, in the ecstasy of their sense of nearness, "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name. Leave us not, O Lord, our God."

But the manifestation spoken of in the text is clearly distinct from God's self manifestation in nature, in conscience, or in history. It is His manifestation *in the flesh*. That expression, mark you, ties it down to human nature as the medium of the manifestation, and identifies it not merely with the spiritual, but with the bodily part of man's composite being. It is a question here, not of a voice in conscience; still less of inferences, however legitimate and however irresistable, that may be drawn from nature and from history. It is a question of a revelation clothed in flesh and blood, and addressed to sense. The text does not say that this manifestation was made visible in a single life—the life of Jesus of Nazareth—and yet the rest of the passage makes it certain that this was the writer's meaning. Unless the whole race of man was "justified in the Spirit and received up into glory," it is impossible to avoid restricting this manifestation in the flesh to the *human* nature, the body and soul, of Jesus of Nazareth. The Apostle means that God was manifested (we may fairly say), in this one member of the human family as He was never in any other. Other men had embodied and reflected some one or more rays of the character of God—this man, His loving-kindness; that, His justice; another, His veracity. In Jesus, God's whole moral life was manifested. It was not manifested partially or in piecemeal, but in its integrity and completeness. Nay more, the whole range of the Divine attributes was there, and when our Lord acted and spoke, God, in His perfect nature became manifest to those who witnessed Him. Accordingly, instead of saying that in Christ the intelligence, or the thought of God was pre-eminently embodied, it being implied that other elements of the Divine life were not equally so, St. Paul says "in Christ dwells *all* the fulness of the Godhead." Instead of saying "He that hath seen Me, hath learned something of what God's mercy is; or something about His truth;" Jesus Christ says, absolutely and without any limitation or reserve, "He that hath seen Me *hath seen the Father*."

It has been felt to be a difficulty by a certain school of

modern thinkers that this self-manifestation of God should be represented by Christian history to have taken place in a single human life. God, they contend, if manifested in humanity at all, must be manifested in the whole human race. As they would have it, His manifestation is distributed throughout all the races of men, throughout all the course of human generations; and they contend, that the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, involves an unphilosophical limitation to a single life, of that which is properly the attribute and glory of humanity as a whole. This view was forcibly put forth by the German writer Schelling, and it has since been repeated in various forms. It really is connected with the pantheistic notion that God is not merely the Author of the universe and as such seen through His works; but that He *is* the Universe, and that the human race, being the highest form of life—the highest form of which we have any knowledge or experience, manifests in its various complications of character, all the different attributes of God Himself. Now, if God were not a moral being,—if God were only the highest *Intelligence* of which we have any conception, but not necessarily also perfect wisdom, perfect veracity, perfect justice, and perfect love, then there would be more to be said for this notion than there is. It might then have been pleaded that the boundless resources and versatility of the Infinite Mind would be best exhibited through the powers and the activities of many minds. And no doubt this is true so far, that all intellectual powers are the gift of God; rays, so to speak from the Divine intelligence, though they be applied to purposes which do Him wrong. But then God *is* essentially a moral being. Our fundamental notion about God is not that which He has lodged in our intelligence, as the First cause, or Author of the Universe; but that which He has lodged in our conscience as the Author of that law of right and wrong, which we have within us, and which is a ray of His eternal nature. We can, without doing any sort of violence to our intelligence, conceive that *God need never have made this Universe at all.* He would not have been less Himself, had He chosen to have lived on in the solitary Eternity (as we must phrase it when we speak of these mysteries from a human point of view) which preceded creation, *but we cannot conceive that God could ever be untruthful or unjust.* Why not? Because we cannot conceive that injustice and untruthfulness can, under any circumstances, be right. We cannot, without tearing up our moral nature by the very roots, suppose that the moral laws which as applied to relations between intelligent beings, we term laws of justice and truthfulness; can ever have been other than they are. Were they, then, eternal as they are —were they in their eternity a something independent of God?

That cannot be; because in that case God would not be the one Eternal self-existent Being. These laws must, as being eternal, be laws of the Life of the One, self-existent, Eternal Being.

It is no objection to this to say, that it must equally be always true, that things equal to the same are equal to one another, because there is no sort of difficulty in granting that the laws of pure mathematics being, as they are, unanswerable truths, so must also be the laws of the Eternal life of God not less than are the first principles of morals.

Now observe, if this be so, God could not have manifested Himself in the human race as a whole without doing violence to His most essential nature. He could not have done this—humanity being what it is—without mingling His self-manifestation with all the impurity and falsehood, all the high-handed unrighteousness, all the degrading meanness, which, alas! make up the history of our race. Clearly then, human nature being what it is; a manifestation of God in the flesh which is to render Him His due—which is really to enlighten and to save us—must have been in some sinless individual, in one whose life should not degrade the high sanctity of the manifested God. The Christian faith teaches us that once only has such an individual been found in human history—Jesus of Nazareth. In Him the one sinless man, was revealed the perfection of the indwelling God. His supernatural birth of a virgin mother was quite in keeping with this high, this unique, office of His manhood to be the temple of the Deity, and inseparably united to it. And it is this which makes the record of His life contained in the four gospels, inspire us with an interest, unlike that caused by any other narrative on which we can set our eyes. It is a history not merely of a perfect human character, but of our God manifested in the flesh.

Why was God thus manifested? Many answers in detail may be given. To instruct us; to sanctify us; to redeem us. But the general answer is, to bring God nearer to the thoughts and hearts of His intelligent moral creatures. Certainly He is already, in virtue of His omnipresence very near to each one of us. He is the atmosphere in which we live. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." But though thus near in fact, He is remote from thought. When we try to think constantly of an Infinite Being, whose power has no limits, whose knowledge has no limits, whose love has no limits, and whose justice has no limits, we very soon find,—if we are endeavouring to attach any meaning to words,—that we are straining our minds more and more painfully and desperately upwards towards that which ever remains far beyond them, remote, inaccessible. Moreover in doing this, such is the weakness of human thought; as being that of finite minds endeavouring to take the measure

of the Infinite; from the very nature of the case we are constantly tempted to discard the idea of *eternity* as something altogether beyond our grasp, in the hope, forsooth, of one day reaching a something higher up which will be within it. That application of Locke's maxim, (however legitimate it may appear in a vulgar sense) "*that nothing was to be believed that was not intelligible,*" is one which cannot be taken into the region of religious thought without grave consequences.

These are especially observable in the history of Deism. In the last century the Deists were engaged in a continuous endeavour to spiritualize, as they would term it, their idea of God. The only proper course, as some of them maintained, was to eliminate from their thoughts of God, all that they could not bring within the compass and control of human reason. They could not really so dilate their finite minds, as to embrace the idea of the Infinite, they therefore only repeated the experiences of some abstract thinkers in the ancient pagan world. Continually sublimating—spiritualizing—their little stock of residuary truth; continually distilling, and repeating the process of distillation, upon their already meagre idea of God, that idea became at last a mere apex of thought, so wholly without outline, without substance, so rare, so faint, as to finally fade away, and die into a sublime nonentity beyond, which did not admit of being brought home by words to any human understanding. And here it is to be observed that the greatest stumbling blocks to the comprehension of the idea of God which deistic reason has discovered for itself, have turned, not so much upon His omnipotence, His majesty, His awfulness, as upon His benevolence, His love, and His condescension. Those who have believed in God at all, have felt that to say He was The Almighty, was the *very least* they could say about Him; but they have been impatient of admitting a single trace of His real, active love. They have been ready indeed to put up with the idea of a passive, unproductive Benevolence, smiling from some remote corner of the Universe, over the tears and sorrows of a creation which it was too impotent or too sublime to reach; but an active, helping, interfering, *practical* love—a love studying human sorrow in detail, and in detail assuaging it—a love making sorrow a discipline, if men would only have it so—a love which man had only to sue for, and he was certain to obtain consolation here, and perfect happiness hereafter; that was an idea of the character of God they could neither entertain nor comprehend. There is no one truth in the whole range of attributes of the Divine Character, that has been more persistently assailed by deistic writers than God's special providence,—I would rather say of God's *providence,* because if it be not *special,* it is practically no providence at all.

These writers have had in view as the Ideal to which they would shape their thought of God, the image of some earthly potentate so occupied with the administration of great affairs of state, as to be unable to give thought and time to the wants of his individual subjects. In the case of a great earthly monarch, this idea of governing capacity might be true enough, simply because man's faculties are limited. With most of us, the mind is ordinarily more absorbed in the contemplation of general laws and principles, than in the study of particular details and circumstances. But then the higher we ascend in the scale of human intelligence, the more clearly do we discern the power of combining attention to general laws, with a careful regard for particulars and details. It is in this combination, and not apart from it, that we find among our fellow-men, the most remarkable instances of true genius and ability; and can we doubt that in that Mind which is above all minds, there is a complete and consummate union of these different powers, so that He who is the Author of the mighty and comprehensive laws which govern the movements whether of heavenly bodies or of the moral world, does also really, not merely without derogating from His exalted dignity, but in very virtue of His Divine perfection, number every hair of our heads, and take note of every sparrow that falls to the ground?

Reason, I say—reason alone will carry us thus far. Reason resists the notion that it is any part of God's majesty to be like an Eastern Sultan powerful to make laws which others only can administer, and to effect on a great scale and by general measures, the happiness or misery of his subjects, but incapable from the nature of the case, and not merely from considerations of his personal dignity, of entering into the particular trials, hopes, and fears of the millions of subjects, who live around and beneath his throne. Still, although right reason does so resist; our feeble thought when it is not upon the strain finds it difficult to dwell upon this special providence as an actual fact. Say, my brethren, is it not so? Especially when under the stress of great sorrows, great calamities, or great disappointments, so long as all is invisible and abstract—so long as Providence seems to have no embodiment, no expression,—so long as nothing constantly meets the soul's eye which so summarizes all that we can cry out with the Apostle in this afternoon's lesson, "Herein is love; not that we loved God but that He loved us."

It would indeed have been strange, if God—a really living and loving God—had implanted in us these yearnings, for close and constant contact with Himself, and had not satisfied them. It would have been wonderful indeed, if He had not reinforced these anticipations of reason, if He had not elevated them into certainties by some sort of special interference or revelation. And we Christians believe that He has done so, by becoming manifest

in the flesh. He has not disappointed that instinct of yearning love which He has given us. He has placed Himself within our reach. He has presented Himself to us under a form that takes our hearts captive, and which stays, without suppressing, the thought that seeks Him. Nothing in human life, as we all know, makes us so much at home, or surrounds us with all that is most intelligible, most tender in the life of our common humanity, as a babe in its cradle; and the Christmas message, "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger," was the Divine answer to the cry of the human heart seeking a God whom it could really love, amid the ultimate abstractions of speculation. Henceforth, God while in His essential majesty, He is necessarily inaccessible to the human understanding—(we can indeed, *apprehend*, we cannot *comprehend* Him); is nevertheless, in His Incarnate Life, the possession of every individual human heart that wills to have Him, so that we may each of us have the privilege of crying "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given." This is our God; we have waited for Him; He will come and save us.

And here let me note two points.

Christianity has been from the first what it was in the manger of Bethlehem. It has ever had two sides, one meeting the bodily eye, another the eye of faith. The visible earthly side of Christianity has seemed to those who have failed to understand its Divine character to be its all. Throughout the ages of Christendom the eye of flesh has gazed exclusively, if I may so speak, upon the Babe lying in the manger; while faith has sat by, watching the angels chanting "Glory to God in the highest!" Look at our Christian literature for instance. Look at the Bible. To sight it is a beautiful collection of history, of poetry, and of moral precepts, coming down to us from far off ages, and entitled on literary grounds to our homage and admiration. *I do not say that it is exempt from error, or that it is above criticism.* To faith it is the Word of God; it is the unveiling of His mind towards us His creatures continued, through a series of organs of His will, through many ages, until at last it reaches a climax in His blessed Son—in His words, and in the writings of His apostles.

Look at Christian worship. The natural sight sees in it only the employment of such and such words; the observance of such and such forms; the following of certain rules which have come down from past ages; the partaking publicly of a little bread and wine; the sprinkling a little water on an infant's brow. But to the eye of faith all this is lighted up by a sense of His presence to Whom the worship is offered, and apart from whom the ceremonials observed are altogether unmeaning. The words are felt to be addressed to a Living Being; the baptismal water

is the channel of the grace of a new life ; the bread and wine the veil of a Saviour present to bless and save His people. Look at the Christian life. To sight it is a fussy unintelligible round of little duties, little charities, little observances, little self restraints, now and then perhaps rising to the heroic, but generally trivial, petty, unpretending. To faith all this detail is seen to be the harmonious language of an illuminated soul expressing instinctively and loyally its devotion to the Perfect Moral Being, who by creating and redeeming it has laid it under an obligation—not to return an equivalent (that indeed is impossible), but to render the homage of continuous uninterrupted love.

By God's manifestation of Himself in the flesh, the chasm between earth and heaven has been bridged over, and a real communication with God, through His blessed Son and through Him only, is open to man. This is the real character of the great festival we are now about to celebrate. This it is that makes Christ's birthday so unlike any other birthday in the world's history. It is not merely an anniversary in human affairs of the highest order ; it marks a change in the relations between earth and heaven. The two natures which in the person of Jesus are inseparably joined, touch two spheres of being,—there the uncreated and the Divine, here the created, the dependent, the human. And in virtue of His having these two natures He is the one Mediator between God and man, He, the man Christ Jesus. We lay hold of His pure and sacred manhood, and we come into real communion with the Deity.

We crowd by faith around His cradle ; we accompany Him through His active life ; we listen to His parables and discourses ; we witness over again His miracles ; and then we follow Him to His cross and kneel there praying in spirit, that on us, too, in all our weakness and in all our sin, there may fall some drops of that cleansing blood ; we are in truth, throughout, holding communion with the Deity. It is God's perfection; God's example ; God's teaching ; God's pardoning love with which we are thus placed in contact. Each word and each act of His human life brings before us some new truth about God's character, and of God's dealing with us as His creatures. God in fact—as St. Paul put it—God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing unto us our trespasses. God grant, my friends, that a deep sense of these most essential truths may accompany us throughout the happy festival of to-morrow. That blessed day, like the infant in the manger, has a human side as well as a divine. It is an occasion for family greetings, for kindly intercourse, and for friendly courtesies which in very many cases will not occur again throughout the year. It has also a joy and brightness, all its own, some rays of which fall even upon those who know nothing of its higher claims upon

the Christian's conscience. Let us not, however, despise this side of the day because it is not all; because it is unspeakably less than all; but let us not over-estimate it. Christmas has its true meaning, only for those who are leading new lives; for those to whom God's manifestation in the flesh is always foremost in their thoughts, and to whom the importance of that event, is such that nothing else can possibly compare with it. It is well if we know anything of the happiness of Christmas, to turn our knowledge to some practical account. Upon this day of the manifestation of the love of God, we may each of us do some act of kindness in His honour to some one of our poorer and suffering brethren. There must be many, only too many, natural recipients of such bounty known to many of us. There must be some known to all of us. There must be some service which each one of us can do for the honour of Jesus, even though he be the youngest or the poorest amongst us. If we cannot give our time, we may perhaps give food, if we cannot give food, we may give a little money; if not money, clothes. We can pay a welcome visit; we can offer some of that sympathy which is so much needed by those who get very little sympathy in this world. Only let each one in this vast congregation make up his or her mind to do some one such thing to-morrow, in honour of Jesus Christ our Lord, and think how much happiness would thereby be diffused. The more we can each of us do, the better; the more heartily and cheerfully we do what little we do, the better. Above all, the more unostentatiously—if it may be without any mention whatever of what we do to any one human being—the more humbly we do, what we do in honour of Him who veiled His Divine glory beneath a human form, once more I say, the better.

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—Genesis i, 1.

Why we should begin to read the first chapter of Genesis on Septuagesima Sunday, when the Christian year has already run some nine or ten weeks, is a question which has probably occurred to more than one of us; and the answer to the question is not to be found in any personal tastes or predilections of the compilers of the English Prayer Book. The first chapter of Genesis has been for centuries the lesson for Matins, in the Services of the Western Church, long before it occupied that place in the English Prayer Book. When we proceed to enquire why, in the earlier ages of the Church, the truths of the Christian Creed were laid out, as they have come down to us for consecutive contemplation, for rather more than one half of the solar year, we find it impossible to give a simple answer to that question. That which in later ages has been accomplished by a congregation of writers, or a mission of divines, was in the earlier periods the word of some prominent Bishop, whose reputation for wisdom or sanctity governed the convictions of his contemporaries; while in the yet more primitive ages it would seem to have been arrived at instinctively by the Church's spiritual cognizance of what was due to the Church. It is indeed this which imparts so high an interest to the study of certain dogmas; it is in fact the study of the fresh soul of early Christendom, of the currents and impulses which swayed its deepest collective life, of not merely the truths which we

hold of the Christian Church, but the successive moods and characteristics of the passion with which she pressed them to her heart.

The sudden change from Isaiah to Genesis is probably to be explained by the consideration, that on Septuagesima Sunday we pass a great dividing line of the Christian Year, and, as the name of the day implies, everything is relative to, preparatory for, the Easter Festival. Before looking once more in our lives fully in the face those stupendous acts which constitute the very chord and centre of the Christian Creed, the Passion and the Resurrection from the dead of the Incarnate Son of God, we are led to take our measure, the measure of our true place in the Universe, and our relation to the Being who created it. We fall back upon these elementary truths for a moment, that we may the better do justice to the real significance of those central doctrines of the Christian Creed, since they fill up the outline, and afford a relief from difficulties which natural religion or elementary primitive traditions cannot fail to suggest. A serious theism, a reverend study of God or nature is the true instructor. To know what God is, and what we are, is to have found the schoolmaster, who, unless we are become inattentive in reading his directions, will sooner or later, like the Jewish law of old, lead us down to Christ.

When Man looks out from himself upon the wonderful home in which he is placed, upon the various orders of living things around him, upon the solid earth upon which he treads, upon the heavens into which he gazes with such ever varying impressions by day and by night; when he looks to the mechanism of his own bodily frame especially endowed with these particular faculties, these limbs and no other; when he turns his thought as he alone among the creatures can turn it, and when he takes to pieces by subtle analysis the beautiful instrument which places him in conscious relationship to the universe around him, his first and last anxiety is to account for the origin of all this, to answer the Question of questions, "How and Why he came to be." Nor is the anxiety diminished, much less destroyed, when he has become comparatively familiar with the wonders before him, when he has multiplied his opportunities for observing them, and has collated his observations; when he has generalised, and tested his generalisations by experience, and feels himself at home in the universe under the leadership of science. Certainly theology, if she understands her own interest, can have no wish to disparage or discountenance physical science. She may indeed decline to revise her Bible in deference to this or that tentative hypothesis which the imagination, rather than the positive knowledge of this or that eminent person, may suggest, but from the mental discipline which physical science

creates she has ever gained. Whatever be the conquests of physical science in detail, whatever amount of light it may bring to bear upon the reading and structure of the universe around us, all this does not dispose of the question which dominates all else, "How and Why did all this come to be?" Science may unveil regular modes of work, she may know that the defects, supposed in one age of the world to be due to some direct interference from above, are referable to ascertained agencies below. She may substitute, and that to a degree beyond all our past or even present conceived ideas, the Doctrines of Developments in life, of distinction between living species; but the Question of questions still remains, Who furnished the original material? Who gave it the first impulse? Who has conducted this presumed development, or in what do we exist at all? And this question it is, which is answered by the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" and that answer is accepted by every Christian in his creed—"I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and all things visible and invisible." What do we mean by "Creation?" Nothing *less* than giving being to *that* which before was not. The Hebrew word *Barah,* which means to cut out or hew, means also to create, and it relates only to Divine Creation, to the giving existence to that which did not exist before; the word itself does not indeed exclude the idea of pre-existent material, or pre-existent force, since it is used in the book of Genesis for the creation of man, and in the book of Numbers for an earthquake, and in the fifty-first Psalm for a purified heart—the product of the grace of God acting on the natural heart. But the context at the beginning of Genesis precludes the idea of its being used in the modification of any previously existing force or matter, since the expression, "the heaven and the earth," is the most comprehensive phrase the Hebrews could employ to mean the Universe, the universe being here regarded as a twofold whole of very unequal parts.

The word "heaven" includes not merely the material bodies which astronomy has in view, but those immaterial *essences* whose existence is a matter of subsequent revelation, and which are much more ancient than man. The work of the fourth *period* or *day* pre-supposes this act, since the Hebrew word properly translated "light bearers" show that the work of this period was merely, by the removal of some perceptible atmosphere or otherwise, to place the already existing heavenly bodies into such a relation to this planet—which was to be the abode of man—as to influence its development.

That the Jews understood the real significance of the first verse of Genesis is sufficiently endorsed. Thus says one writer,

"Those who believed in the laws of their master Moses, held that the whole world, which comprehended everything except the Creator, itself having been in a state of non-existence, received its existence from God, being called into existence out of nothing—it is the fundamental principle of our law" he continues, "that God created the world from nothing."

The mother of the Maccabean Martyrs, when she strengthens her youngest boy for his last agony, before the presence of the tyrant, bids him look upon the heaven, upon the earth, upon all that is therein, and then consider that God had made them out of things that were not. In the Mosaic account of the creation the statement which towers above all else, and compared with which all else is subordinate detail, is this opening announcement "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" it governs the whole theology of the Old and New Testament, it stands in the sharpest contrast to the current doctrines of Heathenism, which regarded the Universe and ascribed all *light* and *life* to a mere unaccountable modification of primeval matter, or took refuge in some grotesque legend which traced Man's origin to an egg or a creation of chaos.

At the present moment then, in Europe, this great question is met with an avowed materialism, sometimes with systematic atheism, much more frequently, in England at least, with a habit of mind which declines the question altogether as being analogical, as being metaphysical, as lying beyond the range of our experience, as bearing on the region of speculation. Who has not read books of late which, to an earnest Christian or an earnest Deist, suggest irresistibly this—the problem of problems—but in which again and again, most inextricably as it seems, the problem is studiously, significantly, passed by, till it can be declined no longer, and then at last we find ourselves before it in phrases of studied and profound reverence; phrases in which the writer bends before something we know not, perhaps he knows not what, a something which is not named. It may be to make all right in case a Theism should turn out to be true after all; it may be, by way of traditional propriety, to satisfy large existing bodies of faith and opinion. But as Christians, "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Creation is a mystery, satisfactory to reason, but strictly beyond it. *Nothing within the range of our experience enables us to understand the process of calling a being into existence out of nothing.* We may do much in the way of modifying and controlling existing matter and force, but we can create, properly speaking not the minutest particle of the one or of the other. The initial act by which God summoned them into being is a matter of faith which we believe on His authority, but which we never could verify.

If, as is probable, the Mosaic Cosmogony is much older than Moses, and was a primeval revelation, still it must have been strictly a revelation; no created sense could have witnessed the act by which the Creator ended the solitariness of His eternity, and surrounded Himself with forms of life: and what I would now briefly insist on is the practical value of belief in creation, its value in thought, its value as to conduct.

It is, then, this creation of the world out of nothing which is the only account of its origin compatible with belief in a Personal and Moral God, for there can be but *four* possible forms of belief on the subject: either God is a product of the world, or God is really identical with the world, or God and the world are distinct in their existence, or God created the world. To say that God is a product of the world, that He is produced by it and exists only in it, to the thought or rather the imagination of thinking beings, is in fact but saying that He does not exist at all. You may pay high compliments to a creation of the human mind, or you may denounce it as pernicious or mischievious, but in either case, whatever may be its comparative power for good or evil, you do not yourself take it, as though it were a *living thing*, into your calculations of thinking or acting; and your loyalty to truth and the fact, would only lead you to dismiss it somewhat impatiently as a phantom which might well have haunted the childhood of our race, but which has no business to flit about the brain of its manhood. To say that God is a product of the thinking world, as distinct from a real objective being apprehended by its thought, is to assert, in other terms, that the *universe only* exists.

If, again, God and the World are two names for the same thing; if the universe is only the self-development of the infinite, and man only that point in which the infinite attains a conscience, then it is clear that we are still playing with words. God, I will not say in the sense of the Bible, but God in the sense of the human heart, is nowhere; the *name* is retained, the *belief* has vanished, just as easily as in the blankest atheism. For such a God is neither Personal nor Moral, He is not personal since He lacks the very elements of personality, He is only that force, which it is difficult to say why He ultimately becomes. And, apart from the difficulty of supposing morality in an impersonal subject, He is not moral because he is by hypothesis identified with all the creative activities of the universe. The real believer in the Divine Omnipresence, who sees God everywhere, seeing His upholding hand, even in the forces of evil turned against himself, is yet careful to distinguish between the perverted will, in whose activity evil only is resident, and the activity of the All Holy Creator.

And if, to avoid this difficulty, we suppose God and the

world to be distinct, but, comparatively co-existent, do we really secure a moral and personal God? Surely not; for this last hypothesis involves the sacrifice of all that lies at the root of any idea of God in our minds at all—His solitary self-existence.

If the universe has from eternity co-existed along with Him, though it be only in form and matter, as yet unshaped by eternal force, so that its gradual elaboration into form and life is reserved to Him, as being, within His element an all controlling agent; still, if we think steadily He has really disappeared. This consequent semi-existence is a supposition which annihilates Him. He has ceased to be. The supposition belongs in fact and strictly to a transitional stage of thought, when men are attempting unlikely compromises which cannot hold in the long run. It throws us back upon an universe without an *objective* God, or, upon an universe which is itself God, upon *atheism* or *pantheism*, and upon the possibilities, avowed or disguised, of no serious religious belief at all. Thus our faith in the creation of the universe out of nothing is alone consistent with a belief in God as a personal and moral life; but let us observe, as I have already implied, that such belief in an initial creative act, is quite consistent with belief in subsequent modifications of this creation through progressive development, guided by a more or less ascertainable law. The narrative of Moses includes a subsequent development as well as an initial creative act; he recognizes God's continuous working in nature in the form and according to the methods of law. In the remarkable passage where he is describing the forms which may be assumed by the creative activity of God, Peter Lombard uses words which, if I rightly understand them, and it, read like an anticipation of Mr. Darwin's doctrine as to the origin of species, though I am far from saying that the master of sentences, with his eye upon the text of Genesis, would have quoted this hypothesis as far as the modern writer would have pressed the theory. But, if we could justly and reasonably carry the theory of development so far as to trace all living beings to some one germ, the real question of questions would still confront us, how did that development which we can, as we think, trace within limits more or less considerable, come itself originally into being at all? And upon the answer to this question depends nothing less than a man's belief in the Being, who, if He exists at all, has infinitely more important claims on our most earnest homage and attention than anything which He has made.

But belief in the creation of the universe by God out of nothing, naturally leads us on to a belief in God's *providence*, and to a belief in the consummate manifestation of providence in human history—to the belief in *redemption*. No such anticipa-

tions would have been reasonable if we could suppose that the world had emanated from a passive God, or had existed along side of Him. But if He created, the question will, at any rate be asked, *why* did he create? Could it add anything to His blessedness and His glory? Could it make Him more powerful, more wise? Revelation answers this question by ascribing the creation to that quality in God which leads Him to communicate His love, that quality in Him which is *goodness*, if considered in its relation to personal beings. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." But if love or goodness was the true motive of the creation it at least implies a continuous and deep interest in created life. If it urged Him at first to reveal Himself in His work under finite conditions (and both David and St. Paul insist upon the supreme significance of creation as unfolding the hidden love of God), it might urge Him to reveal Himself personally also, under finite conditions.

If it is not beneath God's dignity to create a finite world, it is not beneath His dignity to accept the consequences of His own work; to take part by His presence in the development of His creatures, to subject Himself in some sense to the conditions of His own creation. If, in His knowledge, He necessarily anticipates such development of His work, so that to Him a thousand years are as one day, yet, by His love on the other hand which led Him to move out of Himself in creation at first, He travels with the slow onward movement of nature and humanity, and His Incarnation in time, when demanded by the supreme needs of the creatures of His hand, is in a line with the first and most mysterious act of all, His deigning to create. "God having created the world, so (it is natural it should be so) loved it, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Of this profound love of God there is, indeed, on earth one of the most beautiful and instructive shadows, the love of a parent for his child. Such love is the most disinterested, the purest, the strongest, of human passions. The parent hopes for nothing from his child, yet he will work for it, he will suffer for it, he will die for it. If you ask him why, it is if he gives his deepest reason, because he has been the means of bringing it into existence. If it lives it may indeed, in years to come, support and comfort him in his old age, but that is not the motive of his anxious care. He feels at once the glory and the responsibility of his fatherhood, and this leads him to do what he can for the helpless infant that depends upon him. Our Lord appeals to this profound instinct when he teaches us the efficacy of prayer. If men, steeped in evil as they are, yet know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall a spiritual God,

your heavenly Father, give the best of gifts—His Holy Spirit, to them that ask him. And in truth this principle is obviously of wider application; it informs us how it was, as the apostle puts it, "that after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

The creation is indeed a consideration which governs the religious thought of a sincere believer; it precludes numberless *a priori* difficulties as to the existence of miracles; the one supreme miracle of all, which governs all, is already admitted by Deism. It precludes difficulties on the score of the condescension of God, in the incarnation, in the crucifixion, in the sacraments; the great condescension of all was the act which summoned creatures into being at first. As the prophetic references to creation so constantly imply, creation prepares us to see a purpose, whether fully or partially discernible or not, running through human history. And it removes any difficulty, even from the belief that any single human soul as it glides in the awful course of its history, and the complexity of its movement, and will, and passion, before the *all-seeing eye*, is to Him a matter of the deepest, most individualising concern, so deep, so tender, it might well be that no other being existed to share His love. Each who knows anything really about Him may exclaim with the apostle "He loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."

And, lastly, belief in creation is practically of the highest possible value. The disinclination to be under a felt obligation, is always more or less natural to us men, and it is particularly natural to those who are in rude health and high spirits, and who have never yet known what real sorrow is, or what acute disease. It goes with the sentiment of personal independence, it goes along with advanced forms of civilization, and if it is distinctly allied to one or two of the better elements of human character, it is more closely allied with the base and unworthy ones. The Eastern Emperor who executed his courtier, who, by saving his life, had done a service which could never be forgotten, is an extreme illustration of what exists in every day life, in this state of feeling.

A darker example of the same tendency is seen in the case of men who have wished a father in his grave, not on account of any misunderstanding between parent and child, not with the gross desire of succeeding to the family property, but because in the father the son saw—could not but see—one to whom he owed not education merely, but his birth into the world; and felt that so vast a debt as this made him morally insolvent so long as his creditor lived. And if men are capable of such feeling towards each other, we can understand much which characterises man's conduct to his Parent of parents—God. By His very existence

He seems to inflict upon them a perpetual humiliation. To feel day by day, hour by hour, that there is at any rate, One Being in existence before Whom they, great as they may be, are as nothing; from Whom they hold originally, and moment by moment, all that they are and all that they have; One who holds them in His hand, holds them so absolutely at His disposal that no human parallel can possibly convey the sense of the reality of their dependence on His good pleasure. And yet if God exists, this, nothing less than this, is strictly, is literally true; and its truth, brethren, is not diminished by any one of the unlikely expedients whereby men endeavour to lessen their sense of obligation by dwelling on the long (they may be very true) series of developments, and the thick net-works of physical law around them; expedients by which they would fain place at a distance from themselves, or would hide out of sight the mighty, the all-including activity of the Great Creator.

After all, it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. Not we ourselves; of course we never should say that we were our own creators in so many words, but we *may* morally assume this position, we may forget the One Being who made us and all besides, and who will judge us; we may forget Him so entirely as to live as if he did not exist at all. Thousands—it is a simple matter of experience—do so forget him. You see in their very faces that they have no notion that they have a Creator to think about and to live for; and yet, apart from all question of consequences, *it is true*, true to the real law of this universe in which we live, true to a truth which alone can keep us in our proper place of humble, submissive, resigned, obedient, yet withal a hopeful, a thankful, a diligent service. Yes, hopeful and thankful, for, as I said at first, Creation leads us up to Redemption.

A traveller in Cornwall, when gazing on the masses of granite rock which at the Lands' End defy, and look as if they could defy for ever, the continuous assault of the Atlantic, has described what all of us, I suppose, have felt at some time in our lives, when face to face with the magnificence of nature, his oppressive sense of the relative insignificance of man. A few years hence and we should be beneath the sod; but these rocks would still stand where they were, still lashed by the waves, still immovable, while other eyes would gaze on them for their brief day of life, and then they, too, would close.

Yes, man is at first sight insignificant when face to face with nature; but we know, brethren, that he is not really so. In reality the rocks are less enduring than man. Man's real personal self will survive for weal or woe when another catastrophe shall have changed the surface of this planet, when the elements shall have

melted with fervent heat, when the earth and all things therein shall have been burnt up.

Let us think of that day, warranted by His word who made all things we see; it may be deferred for ages, it will surely come at last, it will not tarry, when the predestined time has come. Practically speaking, there are two supreme realities, and only two for each one of us—God, and man's inmost self, his soul. The heavens and the earth are transitional, they will pass away but the word of the Creator, His word of mercy as well as His word of justice, belongs to the imperishable, the moral essence of His being, and therefore it will not pass away. Nothing can with impunity defy His justice, so most assuredly His mercy, manifested as it is in His blessed Son, endureth for ever; and none will plead with the Creator in vain that he would not despise the work which His Hand hath made.

A Sermon

BY THE

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"*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*"—Hebrews xi, 7.

The great servants of God, my brethren, as a rule, share in a common stock of thoughts, feelings, resolves, efforts, sacrifices, which lift them, as a class, above the ordinary level of men, and make them what they are. They live in the world without being of it; they look beyond these narrow frontiers for their ruling interests and their deepest motives. In some shape or other, they give up what they see, for what they do not see; they feel beforehand that Life is a thing at once blessed and awful; blessed in its opportunities, awful in its possibilities. They act as men who are in possession of the clue to its real meaning. They know and feel why they are here, and whither they are going; and in communion with the Author and End of their existence, and in doing His will, so far as they know it, by themselves and among their fellow-creatures, they realize the true scope and dignity of their being, and they fertilize the lives of all around them. "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful. For his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law will he exercise himself day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the waterside, that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither, and look whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper." But over and above that which is common to them as a body, each among the servants of God has some distinguishing characteristic. As in Nature, no two flowers, no two animals, no two human countenances are exactly alike; so in Grace, this reflection of God's exhaustless resources is even more apparent, and each who has a part, still more each who is eminent in the kingdom of

grace, has in it a distinct place, and form, and working, which belongs to no other. His character, or circumstances, confer upon him a speciality, which makes him, at least in some respects unlike any who have preceded him, unlike, we may dare to add, any who will follow him.

The great patriarchal figures who move before us in the earliest pages of the Bible are, as a class, naturally clouded in the dimness of a remote antiquity. Of the seven names which are contemporary with Noah, one only attracts a specific moral and religious influence. We pause at the holy life, at the glorious translation, of Enoch. With this exception, there is little to arrest the attention beyond the length of years which was granted to these earliest generations of men. Strange, almost inconceivable, as such longevity may appear, when we contrast it with the existing limits of human life, it is in harmony, nevertheless, with the general scale of gigantic power, which, according to the most reliable evidence relating to the old World, was characteristic of it. Life in that earliest age was comparatively simple, regular, and free from the social mischief and wickedness which came along with amore organised society. The climate, the weather, and the natural conditions under which mankind moved, were probably very different from those which succeeded, and Paradise itself was still recent. So that although in the exercise of his great prerogative, Man had forfeited the endowments with which he had been originally blest; yet some of these, such as Immortality, would abate but gradually, and thus it was that Enoch was translated into eternal life with God, without passing through disease and death. Five generations of ancestors, at least, must still have been living—Jared, Mahalaleel, Canaan, Enos, and even Seth; while Enoch's son, Methuselah, and his grandson, Lamech, had attained an age far beyond that of modern men. Of all the antediluvian life, from the time of the Creation, only Adam had been taken to his rest, only Noah was not yet born. Sixty-five years elapsed between the translation of Enoch and the birth of Noah, and during that interval the moral atmosphere of human history had very rapidly darkened.

This result appears to be due to two main causes, beyond and above the constantly self-aggravating effects of the Fall. In the fourth and fifth chapters of Genesis, the development of the human race is traced through two entirely different lines—that of Cain and that of Seth. It would seem that notwithstanding the general sense of the phrase elsewhere in Scripture, the Sethites, and not any beings of a higher world, are on this occasion meant by the august title, "Sons of God;" and an inter-marriage between the Sethites, who had preserved the higher and better forms of religion, with Edom and the Canaanites, who had

entirely lost them, issued in the rapid moral degradation of the posterity of Seth.

Distinct from this, but contemporaneous with it, was the appearance of the Giants; they were tyrants, it would seem, physical natural monsters—men who made the law of Might to be the governing force in that primitive society. The corruption of the old world was therefore traceable to two causes, each in its way fatal to the moral well-being of man. It was traceable on the one hand to social oppression and cruelty; on the other hand to a reckless sensuality. Lamech felt the evils of his time; it all seemed to him to flow, as it did flow, from the Sin which had been brought about, and from the curse which had been pronounced in Eden. He felt the burden of his labour upon the ungrateful soil; and when his son was born, we read of the father's melancholy, together with a profound presentiment of some brighter future, in the name of the infant, "and he called his name Noah, saying, this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Noah's general and lofty piety is described by the same phrase as Enoch's —"He walked with God." This expression denotes more than that which was used in a Divine manner of Abraham. Abraham was to walk, and did walk before God. Still more carefully should it be distinguished from walking *after* God, the phrase by which Moses enjoins obedience to the commands given in the Divine law. To walk before God is to be ever conscious of His over-shadowing and searching presence; but to walk *with* God, is something higher and more blessed even than this; it is to be, as it were, constantly at His side, and admitted to His confidence; it is to be admitted to a close and intimate communion with Him as a dear personal friend. It is to be in spirit what the Apostles were in flesh, when they shared day by day in the streets and lanes of Galilee, the Divine companionship of the Incarnate Son. It is St. John's "fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ." It is St. Paul's "being quickened and made to sit together in heavenly places with Jesus Christ." Once only besides, does the phrase occur in the Old Testament, where the Prophet Malachi applies it, not to the Israelites generally, but specifically and distinctly to the conduct of the Priests, considering that they stood in a closer relation to God than the rest of the ancient people, and could enter the Holy of Holies, and have intercourse with the Sacred Presence which was there veiled from the public eye.

Noah's piety, then, was of an exceptionably lofty kind; he is said to have been a religious man, and perfect in his generation, and in the midst of the general corruption he found favour in the eyes of the Lord. Of this temper his thankfulness after

his deliverance is a sample; in order to express it he sacrifices some of the little store which he had saved from the general wreck, and a sentence in the Prophet Ezekiel implies that he had special power as an intercessor with God. Yet his intercession is classed with that of Job and Daniel, and his thankfulness was both in form and the spirit of its manifestation, an anticipation of what is shown in other instances as that of Moses; and Holy Scripture, with its wonted simplicity and truthfulness, describing his falling in his old age into an error, does not place him in this respect above the level of other servants of God. We have, then, still to ask, what it was wherein Noah's excellence more particularly shows itself. And this question is answered in the passage we are considering, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, omitting all else—and there is much, which the history of this great patriarch suggests—bids us observe, that "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith."

Indeed, it is to this period in the life of Noah, that all the allusions to him in the New Testament, with the one exception of that of our Lord in St. Luke's Gospel, consistently refer. In the mind not only of St. Peter, but of our Lord himself, the "days of Noah" were specially that most critical period of 125 years which preceded the deluge. It is possible that the social or political interests of his life may have been greater at an earlier or at later periods, it is certain that the intensity of its moral interest centred in this.

In Noah's building the ark at the command of God, there are three main points to be considered. It implies, first of all, that he had an earnest conviction of the sanctity and greatness of moral truth—a conviction which, more than any other, is the basis of religious character. He was surrounded by a populace which had broken altogether away from the laws of God. Impiety, impurity and licentiousness, were the order of the day. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually; the corruption was universal and profound. To numbers of men, this surrounding atmosphere of evil would be simply destructive to the moral sight. Those of us who know anything of our own hearts and characters must know this, how easily we get accustomed to the sight of what is wrong—how soon we feel complacency, or something like complacency, towards it—how it undermines our sense of its own malignity, and makes us, if not exactly its captives, yet its tolerant apologists. "Neither did they abhor anything that is evil," is a severe and exceptional condemnation of the Psalmist. It is not that evil triumphant, as in Babylon, crushes out the

remaining righteousness in the land; there it is, and we take it for granted in ourselves and others; it is part of the actual sum of human life and activity—nay, it is a very large part; in our hearts, too, it finds something like countenance and sympathy. What is the good, we say to ourselves, of finding fault with the weather, or with an epidemic? We may wish that things were otherwise; we cannot but resign ourselves to take them as they are, and this acquiescence in evil, as inevitable, involves a something beyond; it leads us to shut our eyes to what the deepest and truest of all human presentiment, apart from the revelation of God, points to as its certain consequences. It blinds us to the fact that it must be followed, at some time or other, by punishment. Could it be otherwise, God would not be God, a necessarily and intrinsically Moral Being. Could it be otherwise, the first and most earnest forms of belief in conscience would be untrustworthy. And yet we may by familiarity with this indolent sympathy of evil, learn first to forget that evil leads to punishment, and next, and not improbably, even to deny it. It is inconceivable, we say, that a world-embracing mass of evil should be punished: *its very universality is its safe-guard and its protection; it might be punished if it were an exception, it must escape simply because it is the rule.* This is what we secretly say to ourselves. We shut our eyes to a first truth of morals, and we flatter ourselves that we naturally escape the effects.

It was against this tacit and fatal influence of a corrupt moral atmosphere that Noah's life was a protest of resistance. "He was," the Bible says, "perfect in" or among "his generations," and these generations were corrupt." He was a preacher of righteousness when righteousness was at a discount and peculiarly unpopular. He walked with God when mankind at large had forgotten Him. He did not think the better of evil, of its real nature or of its future prospects, merely because it was practised on a large scale and with considerable apparent impunity. To Noah, the eternal truths were more certain than the surface appearances of life; he was certain that evil was evil, and that it could not but be followed by chastisement, because God was God.

Such a moral conviction it must have been which fitted Noah to receive the Divine prediction of a coming deluge. God does not take the morally deaf and blind into His confidence. The words of Jesus Christ sound through all the ages of human history as the voice of a Divine and presiding Providence: "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," he whose moral senses are really alive, let him listen to the proclamations of God's truth. To those only it will be made known. "He that willeth to do the will of God, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of

God." . . . Noah was warned of God of things not seen as yet, he was the subject in some way—it were folly to attempt to determine in what way—of supernatural communications; it may have been some sensible voice from without, it may have been an unmistakably Divine operation, when God said unto Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, behold I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood. Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life under heaven, and every thing that is in the earth shall die, but with thee will I establish My covenant." Why should Noah believe this prediction sufficiently to act upon that command? Because God had spoken; that was his reason, that was his conviction, it was enough for him, he needed no more. But then his conviction of the unchangeableness of that truth, and of the moral laws of God, would have rendered such an announcement, under the circumstances, to him at least morally intelligible. It was true that what was foretold, was to come unprovided by any past experience. In the burning plains of central Asia, the idea of an universal deluge may well have seemed the wildest of imaginations. A thousand years, at least, had already passed, and there had been nothing like it. Nature seemed to be unvarying in her movements, the sun rose and set, the seasons succeeded each other, the generations of living beings appeared and passed away; there was a limit, so to call it, a regular period traversing this in a discernible and provided order, but as yet there was nothing that met the sense to warrant the expectation of a vast or overwhelming shock or catastrophe. Why should it be otherwise hereafter? why should this accumulated experience go for nothing? why should this sense of security, so amply warranted, be succeeded by apprehensions and distrust, for which, as yet, the annals of the world afforded no parallel? The answer was, that God had spoken. Who that believes in a real living God can plead observation in the divinity of nature against the avowed will of the Author of nature. After all, this invariability, so to call it, appeals rather to the Imagination than to the Reason; the imagination becomes so accustomed to it, so moulded by it, that it undergoes a certain distress at the very thought of its violent interruption; but reason, true reason, is ever mindful of the limits which must bound even our widest observations. Because we observe a continuous sequence of similar effects, it does not follow as an absolute certainty; it at most amounts to a very strong presumption, strong in proportion to the range of our observation, that these effects will continue. We are not really in possession of knowledge respecting any great necessity rooted in the nature of things, which makes it certain they must con-

tinue, and if we believe that the Almighty Author of nature is really alive, and that He is a Moral Being—and not merely an Intelligence, still less merely a Force—and that as a moral being He may have grave reasons for disturbing altogether this physical and social sympathy which encircles us, we shall not then distrust Him if He tells us that He means to do so. And so it was that Noah was moved, as the Apostle says, with fear, with a fear most reasonable, as it was judicious; he did not treat the warning he had received as if it had been only some evil omen, appealing at best to his superstition, but he prepared an Ark to the saving of his house.

This event, in which Noah believed before it came, was appealed to in a later age by St. Peter, as furnishing a reason for believing in a still, to us, future and greater catastrophe. St. Peter is writing at the very close of his life, and already a sufficient time had elapsed since the Ascension of our Lord to allow for the foundation of systematic doubts respecting His second coming to judgment; doubts which were based upon the apparent endurability of the world and of the laws of life. Where is the promise of God's coming? men asked in that generation, too; all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The Apostle reminds those who argue thus, that Time has no meaning for the eternal God, and that to apply our notions of the difference between greater and lesser portions of it to His Majestic providences, is to forget that there is simply no such thing as succession in His unbegun, unending life. "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing—that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

But if Christ's delay meant nothing but His long-suffering, the unchanging order of the world could not be urged as a reason for this unbelief in the catastrophe of a future judgment, because the past history of the world contained at least one eminent example of such a catastrophe. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were opened, the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." In other words, water had been the instrument by which the surface of the earth was moulded; water had been one of the constituent elements of its well-being and productiveness, yet at the creative word of God, from being a servant and blessing, it became an over-mastering force and scourge; and what had been, might yet, would yet, be. Another element had yet a work to do in God's Providence, and neither the lapse of years nor yet the observed regularity of Nature were any real reasons for presuming that a final catastrophe would not come at last. "The heavens and the earth, which are now" says the Apostle, "by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Nay, it is very possible that with a higher knowledge than that which we at present possess, we might be able to extend the argument by additional illustrations.

Some years ago it was usual to refer wholly to the time of the Deluge the more ancient animal remains which had been discovered in caverns or beneath the surface of the earth, but more recent Science urges that these remains simply imply, at least generally, a higher antiquity, and are found under circumstances for which no universal flood would sufficiently account. It may be so. But is there anything in the text of the Bible which obliges us to narrow down to 6,000 years, *or in any way whatever distinguish the measure of the earth's antiquity, short of admitting its absolute eternity?* On the contrary, between the original creative Act and the description of that gradual process, by which through successive periods (*days* they are called in the Eastern idiom) this world was brought into its present state, there is room for a measureless interval, I should rather say for a *series* of intervals; and if this be so, who shall say that many of the animal, it may be some of the apparently human remains, which are now pointed at as hostile to, or at least as damaging to the faith of Christians, are after all only relics and records of by-gone catastrophes of which, previous to the Creation and present order of things, this globe has been the scene, and by which the ages of probation accredited to moral beings who have preceded us here, were by the judgment of the great Moral Ruler violently closed.

It is true that we are here altogether in a region of hypothesis, but I submit that there is at least nothing in Revelation which necessarily contradicts it; while if it be true, it yields support to the argument of the Apostle, it justifies the generous faith of the Patriarch. Not that Noah's faith had anything to do with such speculations; religious men may be glad to harmonize their convictions with the advancing and often inconsistent conclusions of human knowledge, but the foundation of their faith is one and invariable; they believe that He who made the world can control it, and when His purpose is clear to them they do not allow themselves to lose sight of it simply because their imaginations are powerfully impressed by the spectacle of a settled and common order of continuance or execution. They are, therefore, in their deepest sympathies *independent* of scientific arguments, without being at all *indifferent* to them; they walk by faith, and not by sight; they are certain that whatever difficulties may be urged against God's declared Will at the moment, God will, in the long run, justify Himself to men, and will vindicate the wisdom of those who in days of trial or darkness have taken Him at His word.

To be concluded.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Ireland Professor of Exegesis.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

"*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*"—Hebrews xi, 7.

(*Continued from last page.*)

A third point to be observed in Noah is his perseverance under difficulties. His faith was a practical principle, and it upheld him in the face of serious discouragements. He might have easily persuaded himself that there could be no real necessity for his personally exerting himself; that the threatened disorder would scarcely touch one who was already 480 years of age, that it would be enough to warn his children of what was coming, when he himself would probably have been laid in his rest. Why should he arouse himself in such advanced life to so great an effort as that required of him, instead of leaving it to be undertaken by younger hands? The answer in his conscience was, that it had been said to him, "Build thee an ark of gopher wood."

Again, he might naturally have dwelt upon the great mechanical and constructive difficulties of such an undertaking. It is not to be supposed that these were left to be found out for

the first time by Modern criticism. How could such an ark be built so as to secure at once sufficient space and safety? How could it be provisioned, lighted, and worked? How could the several representatives of the animal races be so gathered as to enter it? How would it be possible to preserve them under conditions of weather and temperature so unlike their own? And when the scourge had passed, how would it be possible to enter again upon the earth as solitary colonists, amid traces of so gigantic a desolation? Well may Noah's heart have sunk within him when God said to him, "Build thee an ark of gopher wood," yet he only lived to obey. Moreover, Noah had to begin his work and to continue it, not merely without active support and sympathy, but under the eye of Public Opinion which was not so much hostile, as contemptuously cynical.

What was this extraordinary outlay of labour and skill for? what was its purpose and meaning? How was it other than the crotchet of a mere visionary fanatic? Did he really think that his fancies would become true, and that the settled order of nature, as well as the civilization and progress of human life, were going to be buried beneath the flood which he dreamt of? Was every one else wrong, while he was right? Was his private opinion to be weighed against the collective experience and judgment of mankind? How they must have mocked at the entire undertaking, how they must in their aversion to the awful idea have revenged themselves upon its form and details? What airy criticism must have been lavished upon it, and on each detail supplied to it, and on its complete structure what bitter comments must have been passed. Its uselessness, its ugliness, its utter opposition to the whole current of contemporary thought and feeling. How, too, to some of the more liberal critics would it have occurred to endeavour, as if in scornful and condescending pity, to enter, although only remotely and for a moment, into the strange hallucination that could have produced it, as if surveying from afar some mental curiosity, which only did not move anger because it ministered so largely to amusement. And then with what satisfaction, complacence and confidence would they have betaken themselves anew to the life against which this Ark was a protest and a warning, as to that which was warranted by the common sense and judgment of the time, and by a force of custom and of sentiment, which, as the world grew older, was daily gaining new strength.

Our Lord Himself has said that what took place then is an anticipation of what will be, on the eve of the last judgment. "As it was in the days of Noe so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man, they did eat, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day came when Noe entered into the Ark and the flood came and destroyed them all." Yet, there

was delay, a delay of 120 years, but the threatened judgment came at last, "the flood came and destroyed them all." Whether it was a strictly universal or something less than a literally universal deluge; whether it covered Ararat without covering, for instance, the Himalayas; whether it can be possibly explained by any combination of known causes or only by simply natural ones—these are most important questions, but they do not touch the broad limits of the general fact, still less the moral interests of the narrative; they would only lead us away from it. What is important is, that the judgment *came* —it came to vindicate the morality and sovereignty of God; it came to justify Noah, and to contend with the generations which rejected him; it came to demonstrate the folly and wickedness of the ancient civilization, the uncertainty of that Nature which seemed at the time so well founded and so strong. There must have been upon that day a murmur—an outburst of surprise and alarm—a struggle—an agony—a despair—when this was realized. Poets and painters have endeavoured to pourtray it, but as the mind dwells on any such vast picture of human agony, the heart grows sick and the head giddy. In that very multitude, no doubt, there were degrees of responsibility and guilt, known, too, and weighed by the Eternal Justice. The Apostle hints as much, in the significant expression which apparently implies, that on the descent of our Lord's human soul into the place of the departed, there was a preaching, at least, to some of the repentant spirits of the antediluvian world. But the general result is a contrast between an overwhelming judgment and a signal mercy—a judgment provoked by forgetfulness of the given law and knowledge of God—a mercy awarded to faith in His word—a faith which was not sacrificed to false and narrow views of duty, or to base misgivings, or to the current and corrupting opinions of the time. What Noah's work really and mainly foreshadowed, would have been obscured in *his* day, but we Christians look back upon it from a vantage ground, which enables us to do it justice. We see that in the labour and temporal salvation of Noah, there is already the shadow of a greater toil and a more complete deliverance. Looking to our Lord Jesus Christ, may we not, in its wretchedness and yet in its hope, use in a true sense the words of Lamech, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." Like Noah, Jesus Christ was a preacher of righteousness—the Preacher of a higher and brighter righteousness than man knew before. And as Noah built an ark for the saving of his house, so did our Lord build His Church to be the home of His followers, with the promise that against it the gates of hell should not prevail.

His teaching, His example, His works of mercy, His bitter death, His resurrection from the tomb, and His glorious ascension

into heaven, all are steps in this mighty work. The Divine Architect shed His very life-blood in the labour of construction, and at length Pentecost came, and the Eternal Spirit welded all into a consistent and enduring whole; and as the races and sexes and degrees of men passed within it, one after another, at the Heavenly call, lo! there was to the eyes of Faith neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ was all and in all. And although since those earlier days the passions and the errors of men have raised walls and partitions over and above the Divinely-ordained stories within the Divine fabric, yet this most assuredly will not always last, they are but human while the Ark itself is Divine. Even now, too, it floats upon the waters, upon the vast ocean of human opinion and society, and we, without any merit of our own, but by His free grace and mercy, have been permitted to enter it. Over us, too, once was uttered the prayer that the everlasting God, who by His great mercy did save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water, would look upon and sanctify us, that, being delivered from His wrath, we might be received into the ark of Christ's Church, and being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, might so pass through the waves of this troublesome world, that in the end we might come to the land of everlasting life.

It would be useful to insist, before we end, upon one or two practical conclusions which are suggested by the life and work of Noah. It suggests, first of all, a particular form of duty which at certain times of the world's history may press very heavily on the consciences of public men, whether in Church or State, and at certain terms in life upon all of us, however retired and private our place and work may be—I mean, the duty which may arise on our seeing, or believing that we see, more or less clearly into the Future, which has to be provided for or provided against. Indeed, to endeavour to look forward, or to provide in this way, is a part of the work of those who are charged with the maintenance and support of large public interests; it is their business to observe the direction in which things are moving, the forces which are coming to the front, the combination or separation of force which may fairly be anticipated, the general result that will apparently emerge from and succeed the state of things with which they are actually conversant. Here, as elsewhere, to seek knowledge is more or less to learn; and God teaches us through our natural powers of observation and reflection, as well as in other and higher ways. The prayer to know enough to be able to do His will in our day and generation is answered. And it may be we have to deliberately anticipate very much, to which we would

be willingly blind. Such a habit of looking forward, if its motive is something higher than mere speculative curiosity, will not interfere with the duties of the present hour, nor will it militate against that general temper of trustful resignation, which those who see furthest and deepest feel, and which is ever ready to leave its hopes and fears in the hands of God.

In private and worldly concerns, such foresightedness is not often undervalued. No man, for instance, continues to invest his money in an undertaking, recommended though it be by an imposing prospectus and an influential Board of Directors, if beneath its fair promises and apparent prosperity, he can clearly see at work the causes of a coming bankruptcy. But where the interests of others are only or chiefly concerned, it may be probable that the man himself will have passed away before his anticipations are realized; it is possible for him to find himself in Noah's moral position, to this extent, that he foresees a catastrophe which is hidden from the eyes of his contemporaries, and which imposes on him the plain duty of preparing to meet it. And then comes the trial; will he bestir himself to obey the behest of his conviction, or will he indolently fold his hands and let things take their course? Will he say to himself, "After all, this is no particular concern of mine, it is the concern of everybody, why should I in particular be compelled to put myself out of my way in a matter which interests hundreds of other people quite as much as it interests me? Why should I be taxed,—heavily taxed,—on the score of my far-sightedness, while others can go on easily and quietly, with a perfectly good conscience, only because they are too unobservant to see or to try to see, beyond the next turn in the road of life? I will let things take their course; there is no necessity on my part for an interference which will be mocked at till it is justified, and then even when it is justified will soon enough be forgotten." Will he reason thus, or will he reflect that knowledge, insight, far-sightedness, if they really exist, and are known to exist, constitute responsibility; that he who as a man sees further and knows more than others, cannot merely be as others before his fellow-men or before God; that together with knowledge, at least of this kind, there comes to a certain extent, the forfeiture of that particular species of liberty which is the moral bound of ignorance? Will he reason thus, and act upon his reason?

My brethren, this is a most critical question—possibly for the generation, for the country, for the Church to which he belongs, but certainly, under any circumstances, for himself. Can any one who has a heart at all, think without true sorrow of that King of France whose reign covers the greater part of the last century, who spans the interval which connects the great Monarch with the Bourbon who died upon the scaffold. Few

things in history are more piteous than the contrast of the youth of much interest and promise, and the advanced life of abject dissipation. Yet Louis XV. was not wanting in penetration. Even the gay revelries of Versailles did not wholly blind him to sights and sounds which might have convinced a less observant ruler, that the foundations of the great depth of national life were surely breaking up, and that a new order of things was imminent. Allowing for the difficulties of a traditional position such as his, may we not believe that an earnest and well-considered effort, to improve the condition, and to assert the rights of the lower classes of the French people in the middle of the century, might have saved France from the torrents of blood in which the inevitable revolution was baptized. Yet Louis the Fifteenth passed away his time morally and physically in pleasures, which ministered only to the satisfaction of the hour, while the mutterings of the approaching storm were falling thick upon his dying ear, and his last and deepest conviction found expression in words, which were too surely to be fulfilled: "After us the deluge."

Nor can we walk the streets of Oxford, and know anything of the history of the buildings which meet our eyes, without encountering another illustration of the matter before us. During the two centuries which preceded the Reformation, there were men in England who felt that a change of some kind was surely coming, and that it was their duty to prepare for it. They could not, indeed, read history with our eyes; they could not look forward into the future as we look back upon the past, they knew not whether *reformation* or *revolution* was before them; but at least, come what might, it could not but be well to gather together and to cultivate the higher learning of the time, under the guidance and stimulus of religion, and it was to this Christianity of theirs, that we owe the foundation of some of the noblest colleges in Oxford. It may be that the highest aim of their great legacy will not be handed on in its completeness to the generations that will follow us, and yet it may be the duty and the privilege of our day, under other and yet not altogether unlike circumstances, and on a humbler scale, to leave at least one Institution in Oxford where human learning will, centuries hence, we trust, be blest by Christianity when we in this city shall have passed to our account.

And from the State and Education, it is natural to pass to the Church. Nearly forty years have elapsed since some of the purest and loftiest Spirits that ever breathed the air of this place, saw in the suppression of some of the Irish Sees a call to prepare for more serious emergencies. They, too, might have said, and, as clergymen, might well have said, let things take their course, we will leave the work, and struggle and protest to those who are

in the high places of the Church. But this insight into the future, such as it was, was their own, and they could not, if they would, transfer to others the responsibilities attending it. They saw that the real cause of the present disorders, lay not in any exceptional irreligion on the part of the State, but, in the fact, that Churchmen were at best half-hearted in professing their creed. Samson's locks had been shorn, and who could wonder that the Philistines were upon him? If the Church was to be loved and worked for in the years to come, it must be by men who saw in her something nobler and Diviner than the mere plaything and creation of Parliament and Statesmen; something more than *one* of the many human organizations designed to promote co-operation among believers in Christ. These men saw that the Church, to be upheld, must be really renewed. Yet they would have failed observantly, if they had endeavoured to re-invigorate a faith which they knew to be untrue. In their stirring belief, that whatever came of it, they must go forward in their simple severity, lay the secret of their strength. Out of the old materials which were ready to their hand they set themselves to build an Ark of fresh and strong convictions to a younger generation, they laboured by all the avenues to public thought and feeling that they could possibly command, to persuade their contemporaries to *mean* the Creed which daily passed their lips, and meaning, to *act* upon it.

It may be true that that great movement has been pushed to unwarranted and lamentable consequences. It may be true that its original principle has been in some cases even corrupted and perverted, that it has indirectly created not a little distrust and confusion. What is this, but saying, that its originators and projectors were human, and that they enjoyed no guaranteed exemption from human liability to error. But look at it generously, look at it as a whole, look at it, as its opponents themselves, I dare to say, will look at it, when in the clear daylight of history it can be viewed without any disturbing influences, and it will be said—it must be said—to have simply saved the Christians of England from an impending death, whether of spiritual atrophy, or spiritual hysteria. It has borne a tide of life, the life of earnest conviction, through all the arteries and veins of the Church of this land. Aye! and thank God! beyond it. It is, year by year, at this moment, feeding that life which alone can enable serious Christians to combat with the speculative and political anxieties of the future. He who exclaimed at the sight of Oxford, from Bagley, forty years ago, "The flood is around, but the towers as yet are safe," saw clearly what was coming, and now that he has gone to his blessed rest, it is not too much to say that he has done more perhaps than any other one man in these latter times, to enable us to look

forward to the prospects of this rising flood, if not without fear, on the score of our own possible disloyalty, yet certainly without one moment of misgiving as to the general and final issue to the Kingdom of Christ in England.

It is easy to exaggerate the importance of the Age we live in—it is the settled inclination of self-love which moves us to do so—yet after allowing for this propensity or weakness, we can scarcely doubt that the *present* is a period of exceptional importance, whether to the State or to Religion, whether in England or in Europe. Scarcely a year passes but we hear the crash of some time-honoured throne or institution; and around us are taking place silently, but with astonishing rapidity, vast political and social changes which cannot but lead to much loss in the year to come.

To be entering on the full powers of life at such a time may be a high privilege or an unutterable misery; it all depends upon whether a man has the heart to feel its moral solemnity. Alas, for those who at such a time can expose noble names and ancient orders to an unjust public condemnation, which will make it at least difficult to link the Past surely with the Future. Alas, for those who can see clearly, and far into that which is patent to most of us, yet who treat this far-sightedness of theirs, if not with a reckless levity, at least without feeling one true thrill of desire, to lend a hand towards making an ark of safety for truth and goodness in the future. For each Christian soul there will be,—*there is*,—some share in the work of Noah to be taken, and they who work most in silence, and most unobservantly, may have at last the largest share with the blessed Patriarch.

And, leaving public interests and duties, there is one sense in which each one of us must build his ark, and that quickly. To every man Death is the deluge, and Life is the time given him wherein to prepare to meet it. If we would not sink, then, beneath the waters, we must build the ark *now*, and we have much less than the one hundred and twenty years of Noah in which to build it. What if this brief, this blessed period, is passing fast while we stand aside watching the toil of others, either with indifference or in scorn? What if, as St. Augustine said of some Christians in his day, who outwardly worked for Christ's kingdom, while their hearts were not really enlisted in His service—what if our heart is only with the mercenary Canaanites whose services the Patriarch enlisted to build the Ark, in which, when the day of trouble came, they were not allowed to enter?

Let us look into this matter, if it be for the very first time, this Lent. Let us lose no more days, *no not one*, in setting to work, and let us take heed *how* we set to work.

"The work of salvation," says St. Augustine again, "must be built by Christianity out of the wood of Christ's Cross." We cannot ourselves furnish either the design or the material, and if God will not save us by ourselves, He certainly will not save us without ourselves, without our corresponding, that is to say, with His purposes of bliss and mercy. Yet if He is with us, *it matters little* although the clouds are sensibly darkening, and although the foundations of the great deep already are breaking up; *it matters little* though all be submerged before our eyes, beneath the rising tide; if on the strength of His Word we know and are sure, that with a brief voyage across the troubled waters, our feet will rest upon the Eternal Mountain, and we shall take our part in that song of thanksgiving which will have no end.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Ireland Professor of Exegesis in the University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 7, 1872.

"*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"—1 Peter i, 3.

St. Peter addresses his Epistle, not as St. Paul's manner is, to some particular Church, but to Christians scattered over a wide extent of territory—"throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia—that is Asia Minor—and Bithynia." It is true that these districts join on to each other; that they are all confined between the Black Sea and the Gulf of Cyprus; and that at the present day it is probable that the cruel yoke of the Turk has, in the course of four centuries and a half, reduced them to a dead level of barbarism, which has buried beneath its ruins the sharp provincial distinctions which existed in antiquity. But when St. Peter wrote, the Roman rule was established throughout all those districts; yet the Roman Empire was still young and the Roman rule was universally tolerant of provincial characteristics; and the people to whom he wrote differed not less widely, to say the least, than do the inhabitants of the various States of Europe, in the present day. Doubtless, the strangers who were established among them were mainly converts from Judaism, since it was of these that St. Peter had the particular care, after the division of labour, which St. Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Galatians. They would all have the blood of Abraham in their veins; but notwithstanding this

sense of a common descent, which, since their conversion, had lost its specific advantageous value, they would have shared in many respects the diverse provincial sympathies of the populations around them—they would have been parted from one another by different customs, different characteristics of life, different commercial interests, and in not a few cases by differences of dialect and even of language; by different relations with the various local governments, by very different ideas upon a great many subjects which form the staple of interest in ordinary life. But as St. Peter thought over these scattered strangers—thought of their diversities from each other, he felt that they had one thing in common. They were sanctified by the Spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And this implied much beyond. It meant that the horizon of their various lives was enormously enlarged, and in one direction; that they were, amid all their differences, living, not for this world merely, but for a world beyond. And so St. Peter burst forth into a hymn of praise—for such it is—a hymn, which the fertile and pathetic genius of a great musician has made familiar to the worshippers at this Cathedral, and at many other of the Christian Churches of this land—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for you."

To the question—What has the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, done for us Christians?—a great many answers may be given.

Of these, the answer which is perhaps, of the first importance—the answer which Christ's own Apostles would have given—is this: That by rising from the dead, Jesus Christ proved that He had a right to speak about God, a right to speak about the old religion of His countrymen, a right to speak about the religious conduct of the most influential classes among His countrymen; above all, that He had a right to speak about Himself, as He had spoken. When He was asked to give a sign, that is, a something which might be accepted as evidence, of the commission which He had from heaven, He gave this; He said that, just as the old Prophet, Jonah, had been buried out of sight in the whale, and yet had been restored to his ministry and to his countrymen, so He, Himself, though he should be stricken beneath the pangs and convulsions of death, though laid in the darkness of the tomb in the very heart of the earth, yet would at a given time burst the fetters of the grave, and would rise again. Accordingly, when this prediction had been actually realized, the fact was appealed to, as we see from the Acts of the Apostles, by the earliest preachers of Christianity,

almost in every single sermon. It was the fact which evidently did their work, in compelling men to listen to what they had to say, about their risen Lord, and in making faith in Him at least easy, better than any other topic; and St. Paul puts it forward when he begins his great Epistle to the Romans, by simply saying that Jesus had been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

But the Resurrection has done other things for us besides this, its great evidential achievement; and upon one of these I desire to dwell this afternoon. It has endowed Christians, who treat it as a serious matter of fact, with the grace, the great grace of Hope. St. Peter feels the preciousness of this when he exclaims that God, the Father of our Lord, is blessed, if only because, from His abundant mercy, He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by His Son's resurrection from the dead.

It is a truism to say it—but, as truisms are apt to be more lost sight of than paradoxes, from their very obviousness, it will bear repeating—it is a truism, that we cannot get on without Hope. Hope is not, as the proverb has said, merely the *salt*, but it is the very sinew of man's life. There is no doubt about the fact, explain it as we may, that the human mind must, to a great extent, live in and for the future. The brute, indeed, is content with the present. He feeds, he fights, he gambols, he sleeps, he makes the most of each successive sensation; because his attention is not diverted by any forecasts about a coming time; he apprehends nothing until the experience of his senses—appealing to the faint faculty of association which he undoubtedly possesses, forces the apprehended danger, or pleasure, right in upon him. He has no view or theory of his life, of his place in creation, of his relation to other living creatures about him, of his capacity for and title to a coming destiny of any kind. And herein the brute differs from man; because man is so little content with, and occupied or exhausted by the thoughts, the sensations, the interests of the present moment, that he cannot but look forward, whether to a nearer or a more remote future. His capacity for excellence is exactly proportioned to his power of throwing himself onward into the future, which is yet beyond his reach, and which may be always beyond it.

This truth holds good, whether we look on man as an individual, or as a member of society. What is the real object—the highest effort—of any real Education? Is it merely teaching a boy so much reading and arithmetic, so much history and geography, so much natural science and humane literature, so much political and mathematical truth? No. It is much more than this. The great object of the wise educator is to set before the boy some future to which he may aspire; some future which

may fire his best enthusiasms; some future which may supply him with a strong motive for making the most of his present opportunities, some future upon which, during the drudgery and toil of his earlier tasks, his eye may rest, and which may be the object of his hope. It is, of course, a difficult and a very delicate thing to do this, without developing in the boy, the vice of a purely selfish ambition. But the thing can be done; and, if education is to be vigorous and thorough, it must be done. What becomes of the boy whose every lesson, and exercise, every effort to remember, to understand, to *think*, to compose, is strictly without an object—is only an isolated and sterile labour; having no end beyond itself, or, at best, none beyond the consequences of neglecting it? And does not the same rule hold good in later life? The boy in time becomes a man; he is the father of a family, and he transfers to his children some of the hope he cherished once for himself. He thinks less of what they are, than of what it is probable they will be a few years hence. He thinks over their characters, their tastes, their dispositions, the evidence they have shown of fitness for a particular work in life. He enters into a calculation of probabilities, he tries to picture their various positions and occupations in later years. So strong, so penetrating, is his sympathy sometimes, that in them, as men have said, he lives his own boyhood over again; only, as it must be, with the larger experience and the wider horizon of his manhood. He may—God only knows—he may be destined to terrible disappointment; but then, and this is his strength, he lives in hope. It is this hope which enables him to work hard for his children, to deny himself lawful enjoyments, to put up with ingratitude, with worrying, with dulness, with perversity, in these, the objects of his strongest affections, in a manner which, in any other case, would be impossible.

Nor is this less true of men's specific work in life. Hope is ever the motive principle of the exertions which command success. The statesman, the artist, the man of letters, the great chemist, the great engineer, all as a matter of course look forward. Minds of the lower type look forward to the reputation which will be won by success. Minds of the higher order look forward to the happiness of doing some work, some little work for God, by doing some real service to their generation, or to posterity. And it is this hope which sustains them under all the discouragements of weak health, of unfriendly criticism, unfruitful efforts to mould intractable materials, of conscious present inability to compass and express in fact the ideal excellence which floated before their mind's eye, and originally aroused them to exertion.

Nor is hope less essential to associations of men, than to man in his individual capacity. The institution, the society, the

nation, which has no future in its eye is already doomed. It may still exist; but its life—its moral life—is a thing of the past. An army is never thoroughly demoralised until the hope of victory is quite gone. A nation is not ruined until it has reached the point at which it remarks that it can make out no prospect of expansion, of development, or of progress; the point at which it turns regretfully in upon itself, confessing it has exhausted its destiny and has only to await the onset from without, or the collapse from within, which shall seal the doom of which it has already felt the terrible presentiment.

And, as hope is thus necessary to the temporal well-being of associations of men, and of individual men, so is it, above all things, essential to the highest well-being of man—as man. The hope upon which states, institutions, artists, painters, military men, politicians rest, is directed to objects within the sphere of sense and time. But man, as man—man in his deepest self, must look beyond sense and time; for man is confronted everywhere with the barrier which arrests or dissolves all human hopes: he is confronted with death. Does *all* really end with death? Death is *the* question of questions. It is the first and greatest question which confronts man when he sets himself to think seriously about his place in the universe, about his real being—about what we call his destiny. It is impossible to put off permanently the consideration of this question. It rises up to life whenever there is a resurrection in any man's mind of serious thought. It is as fresh, as interesting, as full of unspeakable and unparalleled importance for this generation as it was for the last. It will be just as much so for the next generation as for this. Science does not solve that question. A materialist civilisation cannot; it would bury it out of sight. Time does not tell upon it. There it is; that question of questions for each and for all of us:—"Whither am I going?"

"What are you going to do?" said an elderly friend to a young man just entering upon life. "I hope," was the answer, "to complete my education at the University." "And what then?" "I shall learn a profession and I shall devote myself to it." "And what then?" "I shall marry as soon as I can afford it." "And what then?" "No doubt, then I shall have enough to do in educating and providing for my family." "And what then?" "Well, of course, in time, I shall get to be an old man." "And what *then*?" asked his persevering questioner. "In time, I suppose—well, I suppose I shall die." "And what *then*?" There was silence. The young man had never looked so far ahead as that.

My brethren, man needs an answer to that question, if the deepest springs of his being are to be really reached. And if we cast our eyes upon the forms of opinion which lie outside the Christian Church, what do we find? There is of course the

materialist answer, that all *does* end with death—that man's higher being is but the vitality of his animal frame and perishes with it, perishes utterly and for ever. But this answer does not really satisfy man. It does not satisfy any man in his best and most thoughtful moods. Why should men be haunted and possessed as they are by the idea, the *instinct* of some coming immortality? Why should this idea be so general, or so importunate, as upon the whole it undoubtedly is? If the philosopher Descartes was right in arguing that the world-wide idea of God in the soul of man could only be explained by the *fact* of His existence, is it not equally reasonable to argue that the idea of immortality, which is so general, arises equally from the *fact* of our immortality as human beings? Because, how else are we to explain the prevalence of this idea? Why should such a hope, such an apprehension, such a presentiment—call it what you will—of an existence after death be as deep, and almost universal as it is? A superstition, which has no basis in fact, has its limits in time and territorial sway. But, wherever man has risen above the lower stages of an animalised life, the idea of a future in some instinctive way at least has dawned upon him, if only as the correlative to the idea of God. As our own Addison makes Cato say in his soliloquy:

> "It must be so—Plato, thou reason'st well—
> Else, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
> This longing after immortality?
> Or, whence this secret dread, and inward horror
> Of falling into nought? Why shrinks the soul
> Back on herself, and startles at destruction?
> 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;
> 'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,
> And intimates eternity to man."

Now this general impression or instinct of immortality has been taken to pieces. It has been traced, sometimes, to the idea that the soul is of itself indestructible, as being a simple or uncompounded essence. Sometimes, as by the great German poet, Goëthe, to the profound conviction that the mental and moral activity which has lasted up to the very moment of dissolution cannot be arrested by the death of man's outward husk, and must continue in some other form and sphere beyond it. Sometimes, it has been traced to the sense of justice which refuses to believe that the moral Governor of the world will not provide a future in which to redress the terrible inequalities of our present state of being. But so long as these convictions do not rest upon some fact which is independent of our minds and of all our varying and shifting moods of thought and feeling, whatever may be their intellectual value—and I would not for one instant be understood to disparage it—they are not, as a matter of fact, strong enough to govern conduct, to restrain passion, to invigorate the sense of duty, to make men embark in

serious ventures on the strength of them. And for this reason, they are only found in the old Pagan and the modern non-Christian world, in any tolerable degree of distinctness among the cultivated classes. They never have influenced the great masses of persons; or, when they have done so, they have, upon the whole, produced that depressed view of life of which we find traces in the literature which abounded in parts of Europe simultaneously with the great outbreak of infidel opinion in the closing years of the last century. Life, it was thought a failure. To have lived was upon the whole a misfortune. Moral apathy was in reality common sense. Moral or spiritual enthusiasm was abject fanaticism. Over such a generation the Psalmist's sentence might, indeed be written: "They lie in hell like sheep, death gnaweth upon them, and the righteous shall have dominion over them in the morning: their beauty shall consume in the sepulchre out of their dwelling."

No man, who has not a clear belief in a future life can have permanently a strong sense of duty. A man may, indeed, persuade himself during various periods of his existence that this sense of duty is the better and purer from not being bribed by the promise of future reward, or stimulated as he would perhaps say unhealthily, by the dread of future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life, if he has not an eternal future before him, is, depend upon it, feeble and impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action; it is that he has a false estimate, because an under-estimate, of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the bearing, the instincts, and the sense of noble birth and lofty destiny which properly belong to him. He is like the heir to a great name or a throne, who is bent on forgetting his lineage and responsibilities in a self-sought degradation. Man cannot, even if he would, live with impunity, only as a more accomplished kind of animal than are the creatures around him. Man is by the terms of his existence a being of eternity, and he cannot unmake himself; he cannot take up a position which abdicates his higher prerogatives, without, sooner or later, sinking into degradations which are in themselves a punishment. He needs a hope resting on something beyond the sphere of sense and time. And God has given him one, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Lord, indeed, in the plainest language, taught the doctrine of the future life—"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you."—"Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him."

Passages of this kind, from among the very words of Christ, might be multiplied. In teaching that man *does* live after death, our Lord was teaching what with various degrees of distinctness, Pagans and Jews had taught before Him. He contributed to the establishment of this truth in the deepest convictions of men, not merely by lessons taught in words, but by a fact palpable to the senses, when He rose, after saying that He would rise from the grave. *He broke up the spell of the law of death!* He made it plain within the precincts of this visible world that a world unseen and eternal, but most actual, awaits us hereafter. He converted hopes, surmises, speculations, trains of inference, into strongest certainties. "Because I live, ye shall live also." This was the motto which henceforth Faith, under the guidance of Reason, descried as the legend traced over the doorway of His empty sepulchre. For that He had risen was not a secret whispered to the few; it was a fact verified by the senses of more than five hundred witnesses. It was established in the face of the jealous, implacable criticism which endeavoured to silence by violence its eloquent protestation, that there is indeed a world beyond the grave.

Not that the fact of Christ's resurrection could force itself upon reluctant minds, or, I would rather say, upon reluctant wills. In the earliest ages, as now, there were expedients enough at hand to evade its force: it was a trick of the disciples; or a phantom apparition; or the product of an excited woman's imagination; or it was a prosaic transfer to the history of an individual of that which was true, but only true of the deathless idea which He had taught to man. The evangelical narrative, the conviction of the earliest Church, the moral strength of the Church, advancing through blood, advancing through untold sufferings, to the heights of a world-wide empire, resists these expedients. It resists them as inconsistent with reason and with fact. St. Paul's argument—"If Christ be not risen our labour is vain," is really an appeal to common sense. Is it probable the Apostle suggests, that we, Apostles, should have forfeited everything, surrendered everything, should be prepared to endure everything, for the sake of a transcendental faith, without having been careful to assure ourselves of the literal truth of the fact on which that faith rests?

There are three forms of interest which must be accorded to such a fact as the Resurrection. The first is the interest of curiosity in a wonder which is altogether at variance with the course of nature. This interest may exist in a high degree, observing and registering the fact, yet never for a moment getting beyond the fact. Then there is the interest of active reason which is satisfied that such a fact must have consequences, and is anxious to trace them; an interest which may lead a man to say that the Resurrection does, intellectually speaking,

prove the truth of the mission of Christ, although the man may know nothing of the power of Christ's blood and of His spirit. The third kind of interest is practical, moral, spiritual. It is an effort to answer the question—What does Christ's Resurrection say to me? what does it mean to me? If it is true—if Christianity through it is true—what ought to be the effect on my thoughts, my feelings, my life? And St. Peter would answer all these questions. Thought, feeling, life, should be invigorated by the force of that living hope. But, then, this absorbing moral interest does not come of any ordinary process of observation and reason, like these two earlier forms. St. Peter says, using a remarkable expression, "We are begotten into a lively hope." It is not the outcome of our natural mind, or of common-sense; though it does not contradict it. It is the product of the Divine breath playing upon the soul, and giving it the new birth—the new capacity for life. Of this birth, the Father is the author; the Eternal Spirit is the instrument; union with Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, the essence and the effect.

It does much else for us, this new birth; but this not least among them—it endows us with a living hope. Looking to the risen Christ, we Christians live even more in the future than in the present. It is part of our new nature to do so, just as surely as it is natural to the Pagan to be engrossed with the things of sense and time. St. Peter calls this hope a "lively" or a living one. What does he mean? There are within many a soul traces of powers, of ideas, of feelings, which once lived, but now have died away. We investigate them, it may be, from time to time, as we should investigate the dead ruin of a mental Pompeii or a moral Herculaneum. Every man, in later life, finds this to be increasingly the case. He finds that the soil of his mind is more and more strewed with the husks of hopes which have ceased to live. Time and disappointment do their work, and we bury away our early enthusiasms as quietly as we can, as one after another they cease to burn within us.

But the hope of the Christian lives. Earthly disappointments do but force him to make the most of it. The lapse of time brings him nearer to its great object. It is not a hope, subject to the laws of decay, which tell upon the strength and vitality of a merely human hope. His enthusiasm and the vigour of his life grow in exactly an inverse proportion to that of the decaying frame upon which years have done, or are doing, their work, and which is drawing onwards in its course towards the portals of the grave.

We can ask ourselves few questions so important as, Have I this hope? and, if not, what is the real value of any other hopes that I may have? They do not take me beyond the frontiers of time. They must fail and perish sooner or later—when the end draws near. They must be buried utterly and for ever in the

grave; for man shall carry nothing away with him when he dies, neither shall his hope follow him. A hope worth having is, as the Apostle says, "an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast," and "entereth within the veil." Its object is thrown beyond the narrow frontiers of this life, beyond this kingdom of change and death. Not to have this hope is to be living at random. It is to be drifting on towards eternity without a chart in hand, or a harbour in view. No cry for help can be too earnest or too piercing if such be our case. Nor shall we cry in vain.

And if we have this hope, what are the tests of our possessing it? One is that earthly things sit easily upon us. We are not uninterested in them; but we are not enslaved by them. To have caught a real glimpse of the Eternal, is to have lost heart and relish for the things of time. To have the imperishable clearly in view, is to perceive the insignificance of all which passes away. A living hope of an inheritance which is incorruptible, enables the Christian to understand the real proportions of things. Another test is a willingness to make sacrifices for this hope. We do not really cherish it till we have asked ourselves the question—What difference do my hopes of another world make in my daily life? What do I do or leave undone, which I should not do or leave undone, if I believed that all really ended at death? What changes would be made in my habits, my occupations, my modes of thought and feeling if—to put a horrible supposition—I were aware to-morrow, that Christ's conquest of the eternal world for me was a fable? Depend upon it, the sincerity of our hopes may be measured by the sacrifices we have made, or are prepared to make on behalf of them. He who ventures little, hopes for little. He who has the hope of the heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal, lays up treasure in it; and, that he may do so, surrenders all that need be surrendered here. The last test is inward peace, and its accompaniment—habitual cheerfulness. Though the Christian may have plenty of anxiety, he is habitually light-hearted. His soul has found its anchorage in Jesus Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified, Christ interceding. He wants no more. The events of life may bear hardly upon him; they do not touch his real self, any more than the storm which ruffles the surface of the ocean, can agitate the depths below. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.

Eternal Jesus! Who, when Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, fix our eyes on that, our heavenly inheritance; that, washed in Thy blood, sanctified by Thy Spirit, we may live indeed, for that world from which we shall look back upon death as the gate of an existence which is really life!

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN

A Sermon

BY THE

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"*Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd.*—John x, 11.

Few Gospels, if any, which are appointed during the whole of the Church year speak to us more directly, more persuasively than this. The Sunday of the Good Shepherd, as in many of the nations of Christendom this day has been called, has or ought to have a charm for the sheep of His pasture almost, if not altogether unrivalled. Now, if you look at your New Testament, you will find that in the first eighteen verses of the tenth chapter of St. John there are three distinct allegories. First comes the allegory of the Shepherd; next the allegory of the Door; lastly, the allegory of the Good or, as it may be rendered, the Beautiful or the Ideal Shepherd. These are allegories, rather than parables. The allegory differs from the parable just as a transparency differs from a painting on canvas. In the parable the narrative has a substance independent of its interpretation, and often lends itself to more interpretations than one. In the allegory the narrative suggests one obvious interpretation, step

by step; the narrative and the interpretation being inseparable. It is impossible to look steadily at the picture without perceiving the real persons and events which it refers to moving almost without disguise or mistake behind. This might have been observed in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, which He has been interpreting for us in the second lesson; and it will appear in the present instance as we proceed. In order to understand these three allegories, we must remind ourselves that in the East the sheepfold is not a covered building, but a simple enclosure of some considerable extent, surrounded by a wall or pallisade. Within it, many flocks of sheep, which have wandered far and wide during the day under the care of the shepherd, are collected at nightfall; and during the night a single shepherd (here called a porter) keeps the gate and guarantees their safety. In the morning the various shepherds return to the fold, and claim their flocks at his hand. They knock at the gate of the enclosure, and he lets them in; and then, they separate their own flocks from the others, and each shepherd leads his sheep forth to the day's pasturage. If the robber wishes to enter the fold, he does not attempt to do so by the door, where he will be recognized and detected; but climbs over some other part of the enclosure, for he comes to kill and to destroy.

The three allegories place us face to face with the pastoral life of the East at three different periods of the Eastern day. In the first—the allegory of the Shepherd—it is still the freshness of the early morning, the dew on the ground, the shepherds returning to claim their flocks; and if the robber is endeavouring to lead away some of the sheep, he must find his way into the fold through some dishonourable track. The porter will only open the gate to the shepherd, who calls his sheep by name; and they hear his voice. Then he leads them forth. They follow him, because they know and trust him. The second allegory—that of the Door—places us in the full noontide of the Eastern day. The fold here implied is not the same in which the sheep were collected during the night. It is the day enclosure, to which, during the hours of the burning sunshine, the sheep may retire for rest and shade, and from which they may wander at will to seek pasture. In this allegory there is no mention of the shepherd at all. He has for the moment

disappeared. The most important feature is the door. The door is the guarantee of safety and of liberty to the sheep. "I am the door," says the Divine Speaker, "by Me if any man enter, he shall be saved, and go in and out and find pasture." In the third allegory—that of the Good Shepherd—we have reached the evening-tide. Already the shades are lengthening on the hills, and the shepherds have collected their flocks to lead them back to the night-enclosure. As darkness gathers, the flock is attacked by wolves that lie in ambush on the way. The Good Shepherd, who loves them with personal affection, throws Himself between them and their cruel enemy; and in doing so sacrifices Himself—He "giveth his life for the sheep."

Now, this allegory of the Good, or Beautiful, or Ideal Shepherd, is no mere repetition of the first allegory, although they both refer to one person only; for the shepherd who knocks at the door in the early morning is contrasted with the thief and the robber who enter by another way, and the good shepherd is contrasted with the hirling or mercenary who flies from the wolf and sacrifices his flock to his personal safety. We ask ourselves the question, what would our Lord's hearers, if they understood what the two meant in the first instance, understand by this language. We must look for the answer in what was actually going on at the time in Judea before the eye of the Speaker. When He spoke of the fold, every religious Jew would think of the commonwealth or Church or nation of Israel. The old theocratic nation was the fold of Jehovah. And when He spoke of the shepherd, every religious Jew would think of the expected Messiah. In the twenty-third Psalm, David applies the figure to the Lord Jehovah:—"The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing." And Jehovah is —in both Ezekiel and Zechariah—announced as destined to appear once more to His people as the "Shepherd of Israel." In the latter especially, He is represented as making one last effort to rescue His flock from slaughter. He only attaches Himself to the poorest of the flock, and receives thirty pieces of silver—the wages of the lowest staff—as He leaves them to the bad shepherds. The whole of this picture was especially before the mind of our Divine Lord when He was presenting these allegories. He was Himself in His own thought, the very

Shepherd of prophecy, who had come to the gate of the Jewish commonwealth to find out His sheep and lead them forth.

But who was the porter? Among various explanations, one answer would have occurred at once to those who heard our Lord speak—to those who knew the history of the time—which cannot but occur to any one of us who has carefully studied St. John's Gospel. It was to John the Baptist the last of the Prophets, keeping the gates of the ancient fold, that Christ came as the morning was breaking on the earth. From his followers He received His earliest disciples. John the Baptist bore Him witness.

And who were the thieves who had not come into the fold by the gate? We cannot doubt that they were the Pharisees who had established among the Jewish people their great authority by much hypocrisy and violence. They had not entered by the gate. Their influence was not based on the old law of Moses, but on bad traditions which had grown up around that law, and which they had fostered, and the Baptist, when he encountered them, had not kept any sort of terms with them. "They were," he said, "a generation of vipers, whom he warned to flee from the wrath to come, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance." The whole scene of the first allegory is laid at the commencement of Christ's ministry. In the second, He has led out His own from the old Jewish fold into the pastures of the new kingdom. No shepherd is mentioned here. Christ is the Door. The new fold is the Gospel enclosure, in which He is everything. Through Him the sheep go forth for pasture, and retire within for safety. Here again He contrasts Himself with the Pharisees. The image of the Door melts away into His own actual person. And in the third allegory, the last days of His ministry, which were actually passing, were before Him. The evening of His earthly life is upon Him. He is near His Passion. The wolf is already lying in ambush for the flock. The hireling shepherd flees—true to his nature. The Good Shepherd gives His life. Who is the wolf here? As always—the Pharisee party. Who is the hireling? Certainly not the Pharisee, against whom the hireling is the only defender. Our Lord would have understood by the hireling the Jewish priesthood. It is a mistake to suppose that the religious errors of the two were identical. The

Pharisees to a great extent were a lay sect; and they had obtained influence over the religious life of the people and corrupted it. The priesthood ought to have held them in check. They were not indisposed to believe in our Lord. Before the Passion "many of the chief priests also believed in Him." But they did not dare to face the Pharisees; and Jesus was the victim of Pharisaic indignation. It was plain what would follow. Our Lord knew. But even an ordinary observer of the forces then governing the political life of Judea must have understood the words—"I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

When our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, is He using a title that has lost its value since He has ceased to live visibly on the earth? Or has the title a true meaning for us now? Here, we cannot but observe that, writing some forty years after the Ascension, St. Peter, calls Him a Shepherd, and St. Paul calls Him "the Great Shepherd of the sheep." And in the first ages of the Christian Church, when persecution drove the faithful from the streets and public places of Rome, down into the catacombs, burrowed out beneath the busy life of the Pagan city; one figure more than all others they delighted to draw in the vaults in which they prayed—the figure of the Good Shepherd. Sometimes the Apostles were ranged alongside of Him. Sometimes the sheep were standing around, with upturned faces, dependent upon their Deliverer and Guide. Sometimes He was carrying the wanderer on His shoulder, or holding the lamb to His bosom, or leading the weak of the flock, all expressing the tenderness and the active love of the Saviour, moving among His flock to bless them. And ever since those early days, when Christ has been asked to bless from His throne some work of mercy, to relieve the suffering, to teach the ignorant, to deliver the captive, it has been as the Good Shepherd of humanity. The title has an attractive power for the Christian heart which is all its own. Not that it is easy to enter into the full force of this beautiful image. To do so, we must know something really about ourselves—something really about the person of our Saviour. We must feel first all our weakness, all our dependence, and all our need of a heavenly Guide and Friend. We must sincerely feel that, face to face with the Eternal

world and its awful Monarch, self-reliance and self-sufficiency are a great mistake. The old pagan Roman did not, could not feel this; and therefore in his unconverted state he spurned the idea of a Good Shepherd, whom it was his business to love and worship. It was humiliating to him. It was intolerable that one, who had the blood of the Cæsars and the Scipios in his veins, should speak of himself as a sheep. To him, the Christians who could do so, appeared poor-spirited, degraded, contemptible people, who had never known the majesty of the Roman name. What did he want with a shepherd? He depended upon and trusted himself; and if life became intolerable to him, and he was one of the sect of the Stoics, he meant to put an end to himself. That he should be led, pastured, guarded, delivered, was out of the question. He did not want to be placed under a sense of obligation to anyone—least of all an obligation so immense and utterly beyond discharge as this. He might have reflected that he owed the gift of existence to some higher Being, however little he knew of this Being, and that he could not repay it.

But how many of us go through our lives, without ever, or often, thinking seriously of what it is to be created Beings, and what it is to have a Being whom we name our Creator—a Being to whose free bounty all we are, and all we have, is literally due! What wonder then, if the old Pagan Roman did not enter — what wonder if some of us do not enter—into the blessedness of devotion to the Good Shepherd? Until a man's heart is broken by the sense of personal sin, and by the love of God revealed to the soul in all His beauty and all His justice, the figure of the Good Shepherd must be repulsive; because it reflects upon the man, the sense of an immeasurable personal humiliation. Besides, we must know and believe something about the person of Jesus. If Jesus Christ was merely a man, how could He, in any rational sense, be the Good Shepherd to you and to me? It is now eighteen centuries and a half since He left this planet; and if we only think of Him as a departed Saint, somewhere in the bosom of God, we have no reason whatever to attribute to Him a pastoral interest in the number of Christians who look up for help and guidance to Him day by day, as He sits upon His throne. Can we suppose that any *merely*

created Being could be thus a superintending Providence, an all-contemplating, all-embracing providence to Christians? Yet, when He says, "I am the Good Shepherd." He disengages Himself from the historical and political circumstances which surrounded Him. He will be to all the Jews what He is already to the faithful few in and about Jerusalem. When He says, "I am the Life," "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," or, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," or "I am the true Vine," we feel that all this language, in the mouth of a merely human teacher would be pretentious, inflated, insufferable. We cannot conceive the best man we have known in life permitting himself to speak of himself as the Good Shepherd of men. He would forfeit his claims to our love, our reverence and our respect. Why is it not so when our Lord speaks? Because there is that in Him, beyond and yet inseparable from, His perfect manhood, which makes it not pretentious, inflated, or blasphemous in Him, but perfectly natural and obvious. We feel that He is Divine; and such sayings as "before Abraham was, I am," "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," "I and the Father are one," are in the background of His thought, and explain and justify what He says about Himself as being the Shepherd of human souls. But it is because He is also Man that such a title especially befits Him; because He is no abstract Providence, but a Divine Person, who has taken part in our nature, communes with and blesses us.

Let us, very briefly reflect what this truth involves, as to our relations with our Redeemer, as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep. He knows us individually, and He knows all about us, not merely as we seem to be, but as we are. Others look us in the face day by day, and we them. They touch the surface of our real life; perhaps they see a little way below the surface, but "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" What do they know of what passes in the inmost sanctuary of the reason, of the conscience, of the heart? Nor do they know much of our outward circumstances, our trials, our struggles, our difficulties, or what we deem such. Citizens of this vast metropolis, we live amid a multitude, yet in solitude; but there is one Being who knows all, upon Whom nothing that passes is lost, to Whom nothing that affects us is

matter of indifference. To Him "all hearts are open, all desires known;" from Him "no secrets are hid." All the warps of our self-love, all the depth and corruption of our hearts, all we might have been and all we are, are spread out before His eyes like a map, to which each moment adds something He has anticipated, adds in the way of extent, without diminishing its clearness. Because of this He is able to help, to guide, to feed, us, if we will to save us, aye, to the uttermost. And He has a perfect sympathy with each of us. He is not a hard guardian who sets Himself to keep us in order without feeling for our individual difficulties. "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities." His warrant is His perfect human sympathy, to which the image of the Shepherd, taken alone, does less than perfect justice.

Nothing which affects us is a matter of indifference to His tender heart. He is not interested in the noble, the wealthy, the intellectual, or the celebrated, alone. [Wherever there is a human soul seeking the Truth, a human heart longing to lavish its affection upon the Eternal Beauty, there He is at hand; unseen, yet energetic, entering with a perfect sympathy into every trial, anticipating in ways we little dream of, every danger.] Not suspending our probation by putting us out of the reach of temptation, but making a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. But this—guided by perfect prudence and the highest reason in the days of His earthly ministry—this was especially observable—He dealt with men according to their characters and capacities. He did not put the new cloth on the old garments, or the new wine into the old bottles. He did not ask His disciples to imitate the austere life of the Baptist. He knew them too well. He said, that would come to them by and by. He did not tell them all He had to tell at once, about Himself, about His living and the means of living the Divine life. This would have been too much for them, if it had been told at once. "I have yet many things," He said, "to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come." Those who were yet in the infancy of the Christian life, He would feed with milk.

He reserved strong meat for those who knew and could bear more. So it has been since. If we have enjoyed or been denied, this has not been by *chance*. The Good Shepherd who knows us has ordered it. He has proportioned our duties, our trials, our advantages, our drawbacks, to our real natures, capacities and inmost characters. Certainly the characteristic of His government is "As thy days thy strength shall be." So runs His most gracious promise.

Above all, He is disinterested. He gains nothing by watching and guarding such as we are. He gains nothing by seeking us. We contribute nothing to His majestic glory. He seeks us for our own sakes. He spent His life among the villages and hamlets of a remote province, when He might have illuminated the intellectual centres of the world. He spared Himself no toil, He had no leisure; persecutions, humiliations, rebuffs, sufferings, could not diminish the ardour of His sacred and consuming zeal, and He crowned All, by embracing with the utmost freedom—when He might have avoided it—an agonizing death, in order to save His flock. He gave His life for the sheep once for all. Eighteen centuries have gone by, but His death is as powerful to deliver now as then. Self-sacrifice like that on Calvary, does not lose its virtue in the lapse of years. The precious Blood does not fail us now, more than then. For it is the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep has been raised from the dead, that He may plead for us perpetually on earth and in the courts of Heaven.

Ah! we look up to Him on His throne, and here in His courts we sing—"We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Do we mean that? We kneel day by day and confess that we have erred and strayed from His ways—and the Eternal Father's ways—like lost sheep. Do we mean that? If we do, have we returned with anything like sincerity to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls? If we do, are we endeavouring to know Him as, He certainly knows us? We need a guide through the uncertainties of life. Do we recognise one in Him? We need a physician for our moral wounds; we need a source of strength in temptation, a rule and standard of holiness; an arm—a strong arm—to lean upon when we shall

pass through the valley of the shadow of Death. All these He is. All this He can give us and much more. But have we any practical knowledge of Him, which enables us to claim these blessings at His hand. When He has fixed His eye upon us at some turning point of life—when He has reached out His pastoral crook and beckoned us up the heavenly way, have we followed? Has He done so much for us, and shall we do nothing for Him? Are we associating ourselves in any sense with His work in the world? As we may all join in His intercessions, so may we all work under the mantle of the Good Shepherd. How many a word of mercy in the Church of God has that gracious, tender figure inspired, which else had been denied to suffering human beings! By our individual exertions, strengthening the hands and hearts of the ministers of Christ, by entering with sympathy and humility into cases of suffering and ignorance, which, but for His grace, might have been our own, we can all—laymen as well as clergy, women as well as men—simple and unlearned, as well as intellectual—have a part in promoting that great work of ministration and care for fallen man which is the glory of our Divine Master, as the Good Shepherd of humanity, and which is our own only ground of hope, in Time and for Eternity.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis, University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 21, 1872,

BEFORE HER MAJESTY'S JUDGES

AND

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

"*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*"—1 Peter ii, 16.

St. Peter touches a note which appeals to human interests in all ages and everywhere. Freedom is one of those words which need no recommendation. It belongs to the same category as light, order, progress, truth, law. It is one of the ideas which, in some sense or other, mankind accepts as an axiom—as a landmark or principle of healthful life beyond discussion. What do we mean by freedom? We mean the power of a living being to act without hindrance according to the true law of its life. A mineral, therefore, is in no sense capable of freedom. It neither grows nor moves—it does not live. A tree, in a metaphorical or attenuated sense, is capable of freedom. It contains within itself the mystery of a vital principle which requires certain conditions for its necessary development; and in this sense we may speak of a tree having freedom to grow. The lower animals in various degrees are

capable of something which may, with better reason, be called freedom. They are capable of it in degrees which vary proportionately to their approach to the frontier of self-conscious, self-determining life as manifested in human beings. The brute does not merely grow, he moves from place to place. He does not move by any fatal necessity but can take this direction or that as instinct prompts him, without interfering with his movement, so as to trammel his freedom. Still, it is instinct he obeys. He does not reflect about his movement. He does not choose, while comprehending his power of choice. He is really from moment to moment governed by that which is for the time being the strongest instinct or passion that is upon him. If he is free to run about, free to eat what he likes, to sleep and rest when he likes, he has all that he wants, and his instinct will probably guide him to sleep, eat and take exercise in such proportions and at such times as the law of his life requires. With man, it is otherwise; for he is a moral being. He reflects, and knows what he is doing when he reflects. He chooses, and knows what he is doing in this exercise of choice. Much of man's life is vegetative, no doubt, like that of the tree. Much of it is sentient, and under the government of instinct, as that of the animal. We go through thousands of movements and acts every day of our lives, as we say "without thinking about them." We obey instinct, or habit, or some governing inclination, without throwing any conscious deliberate energy into the act of obedience. But our true life as human beings is something higher than this. Man lives and acts as man. He asserts that which is properly his human liberty when he obeys a law which he is free to disobey. For he is a moral being, and in this his greatness consists. It is not uncommon now-a-days to hear the insignificance of man insisted on as compared with the planets, with the suns and stars that roll over our heads. Certainly, my brethren, if the greatness of created beings is to be determined by their material bulk, man *is* insignificant enough. He is, in this particular very much below many other animals around him on this his own planet. But man can do that which no planet can do—he can obey or refuse to obey the highest law of his life. The planet cannot leave its appointed orbit. It circles on, age after age, in obedience to the mathematical law which governs it. God has given it a law which shall not be broken. Man can disobey the highest law of his life; and this liberty is at once his prerogative and his danger. The highest law of man's life, is to know, love and serve the Being who gave it to him—the Being whose very existence has not dawned upon the most intelligent of any of the creatures below man. God wills that man should obey Him freely—that is, that he should be able to refuse obedience, and

yet should obey. And this, which is man's consummate prerogative, is necessarily linked to a fearful responsibility for declining to exercise it. If man obeyed God only as a planet revolves in its orbit—only as a brute eats his food—he would not be man.

Man's freedom is exercised in three main departments of his life—in his life as a social being, which we term his political life; in his life as a thinking being, or his intellectual life; and in his life as a moral being—his personal spiritual life. In each of these departments of human activity, Christ our Great Deliverer has made man free.

Christ our Lord has given to man, first of all, political or social freedom. He has not, indeed, drawn out a scheme of government, and stamped it with His Divine authority as guaranteeing freedom. We Englishmen rightly prize a constitutional Monarchy as the best form of government; especially when it is recommended by the character of such a Sovereign as our present Queen. But while we cannot even entertain the thought of abandoning our own Constitution for any other, we must frankly admit that a citizen of the United States, for instance, may feel himself as much at home amid the political doctrines of the New Testament as any subject of her Majesty. For the New Testament asserts nothing but two necessary elements of man's life as a political or social being. The first is the existence of some government which it is his conscientious duty to obey; whether it be an Assembly, a President, a King, or an Emperor—some "higher power" to which every soul is to be subject, because there is no power but of God, and the "powers that be" are ordained of God. Secondly, it asserts the fact of the freedom—the inalienable, indestructible freedom of the individual Christian under any form of Government.

There had been something like freedom in the ancient heathen world for particular classes, particular races, for the masters of conquered provinces, and the owners of thousands of slaves. The ruling races or classes acted much as they liked. They jealously noted any attempt on the part of any aspiring tyrant to destroy liberty. This was an external, rather than an internal, a political rather than a moral liberty. The liberty of the few it was, and yet the enslavement of the many. As it had no moral and internal basis it was the accident, rather than the spirit, of the ancient world; and as political constitutions wore out it died away, by an invariable law, into a tyranny. When our Lord came on earth, all that could be called civilization was under the sway of the Roman Cæsar. Yet with Him also there came the germs of political liberty; for when the individual man had learned to feel the greatness and the interest of life—the real horizon which stretches before the

eye of the soul, as it looks into eternity beyond the grave—the depths of being within each soul, its inexhaustible capacity for pleasure and for suffering, the reality and nearness of the great God—and of His Divine Son—of our unseen fellow-citizens, the blessed angels—the awful distinction of being ransomed by the blood of the Most Holy and sanctified by the Eternal Spirit, it was impossible not to feel also that in the highest sense each man had rights to assert, and a bearing to maintain. And thus from the first the Christian was a free man simply because he was a Christian. The political or social accidents of his position could not touch that unimpeded movement of his highest life in which true freedom consists.

It has indeed been alleged—it will have occurred to you—that as a matter of fact our Lord left the great despotism of the ancient world untouched. Christ taught; He was crucified; He was buried; He rose; He ascended; but the Cæsar Tiberius still sat on the throne of the world. There never was a more odious system of personal government than that of the Roman Emperors. The surviving forms of the extinct Republic only serving to make the actual tyranny harder to bear. Yet, even under such an Emperor as Nero St. Paul wrote—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers;" and St. Peter —"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or unto governors;" meaning the consuls and pro-consuls established under the Roman rule in Judea; "as unto them that are sent for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." In the same way, the Apostles advised Christian slaves to give obedience to their masters, as if to the Lord Christ Himself—to obey, not with eye-service, as if they had only to do just so much as might be insisted upon by a jealous taskmaster, but with singleness of heart, as throwing every energy into a conscientious work.

It may be asked, How are such precepts compatible with the assertion that Christ gave man political freedom? The answer is that He gave us a moral force which did two things: First, as I have noted, it made every Christian, in virtue of the law of his life, independent of outward political circumstances; and next, it made the creation of new civil institutions only a question of time. The slave, who could not whisper to his fellow-slave except when he was at rest—the slave who could not control a single movement of his person throughout the long, weary day —the slave whose every gesture was regulated by an implacable etiquette—the slave whose life was, at least during particular periods of Roman history, literally at the disposal of his owner—he, too, if a Christian, was inwardly free. He had a sense of freedom, a power of living according to the highest law of his

being, which the Cæsar on his throne dreamt not of. That was enough for him, at least for the present, if he knew the conditions of his own happiness, and if he had divined the will of his Lord. By-and-by the moral seed which had been sown would bear fruit, in the emancipation of such as himself; it would bear fruit in new public institutions; and it would change the face of the world. It was not, indeed, our Lord's part, like that of some agitators of the time, to promote a rising among the slaves, to arouse provinces into rebellion against their rulers, to issue programmes for a political or social revolution. That would have been at issue with the lessons of love, tenderness, charity, longsuffering, which He came to teach. But His one doctrine of the worth and dignity of redeemed man was like leaven deposited in the corrupt mass of human society, and in time the world could not but be leavened politically, as in other ways. The process has been advancing for centuries; and it is still going on. We Englishmen owe much to it, more, perhaps, than any nation in the world.

It has been said, I know, that if despotism ceased in this country with the Stuarts, liberty is still confronted by the Statute Book. Of course it is. How in the world could it be otherwise? The objection assumes that between Law and Liberty there is some sort of necessary antagonism. We know, unhappily, that in some foreign countries this opposition is taken for granted; that there are countries near our own in which Law and Liberty are treated as implacable enemies, in which order is secured only by the confiscation of all personal liberty, in which Liberty raises its head only amidst the ruins of Order and of Law. We may well thank God, that He has spared us such trials. When your lordships come down to this Temple of Jesus Christ, you represent two principles, and not merely one: you represent the sacred interests of Liberty, not less than the sacred interests of Law. For, Law is the guarantee of Liberty—not its enemy; and Liberty, if it knows its own interests, is ever the enthusiastic friend of Law. Each of them rests upon an ultimate fact which is Divine: Liberty, upon the fact of the greatness, the majesty of individual human life; Law, upon the fact of our divinely implanted social instincts, and, as a consequence, on the Divine origin of society and the inevitable necessity of upholding and protecting society against individual selfish passion. To crush this Liberty in the name of Law is to sow the seed sooner or later of social insurrection. To depreciate or insult Law in the name of Liberty is to make of Liberty a cloke of maliciousness, and to ensure its ruin. Nothing can be more deplorable than a conflict betwen these sacred principles. An old Psalmist, reviewing the tyrannical administration of law by the Judges of Israel, says, "all the foundations of the earth

were out of course." The whole social fabric literally totters to its base when there is a struggle between human law and the Divine law of conscience; between law and the highest liberty. To avoid this must be the end of every wise legislator, to deprecate it, the heartfelt prayer of every good citizen.

Christ our Lord has given man also intellectual freedom. He has enfranchised man by the gift of truth—truth in its fulness—truth not merely relative and provisional, but absolute and final. As He said Himself, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Until He came, the human intellect was, in different degrees enslaved. It was enslaved either to some degrading superstition, or to some false and one-sided philosophy. Man must think about himself—about his place in the universe, about his destiny, about his relation to a Higher Being, and if he has no reliable truth at hand he makes the best he can of attainable error. He may "change the glory of the Incorruptible God into an image, made like unto corruptible man:" still *that* he feels is better than nothing. He may listen to a teacher who, while promising him liberty, is himself the servant of corruption: still that is more endurable than utter silence. Man's interest in the great problems which haunt him betrays him to his intellectual foes; unless he have embraced the truth—unless the truth in all its greatness and tenderness has made him free.

It is undeniable, as a matter of fact, that the religion of Christ gave a great impulse to human thought. It made men think as they had never thought before. It made men feel what it is to have within this puny body a spirit which can take the measure of the spheres. When Christ, in all the glory of His Godhead and His Manhood had enthroned Himself in the soul, He taught man by His very presence to think worthily of the greatness of God, and—despite his weakness and corruption—of the greatness of man. He freed man from the narrowing cramping influence of local philosophers and teachers of petty schemes and theories, in the interest of classes and races. He led men out into the great highways of thought, where, if they would, they might know the universal Father, manifested in His Blessed Son,—as the Author of all Existence, as its one legitimate End.

You ask me whether, as a matter of fact, Christianity does not cramp intellectual liberty, by insisting upon the necessity of believing Christian doctrine—whether the creeds for instance, are not hostile to, as being limitations of, mental liberty. Certainly, my brethren, our Lord has given us a body of truth which we can, if we like, reject—which it is our happiness to believe. What He has done for man in this way is embodied in His own recorded teaching, in the writings of the Apostles, and finally

in the creeds of the universal Church. These documents are to true intellectual liberty, just what law is to social liberty. They protect: they do not cramp it. They afford a fixed point from which thought may take wing. They do not enchain thought. If man would think steadily and fruitfully, he must begin with fixed ascertained truth. You cannot survey the surface of the ocean while you yourself are tossing upon its waves. You must plant your foot upon a rock in order to do so, from a basis which is fixed, while all around you is perpetually shifting; and to plunge voluntarily off the rock into the waves is deliberately to surrender this vantage ground. It is with creeds as with law. If you repudiate law you may become the slaves of every individual will. If you repudiate the creeds of Christianity you may become the slaves of any petty intellectual dogmatizer. In repudiating the creeds you leave the broad public highways of the Christian faith, you leave the many-sided and comprehensive thought of the universal Church for the cramped and morbid speculations of individual thinkers; you abandon yourself to all the petty tyrannies, to all the insolent usurpations of private thought, to all the formulas of individual human masters, from which Christ our Lord has set you free. If it would be a mistake to tear up Magna Charta in the supposed interests of Freedom, because Magna Charta certainly recognizes the obligations of Law, it is also a mistake to mutilate or disuse a great creed of the Universal Church—such for instance, as the Athanasian Creed—under the idea of securing mental liberty. The creed does but state that which every well-informed and faithful Christian wishes—must wish—to believe. Christian doctrine, is to man's very highest life of thought, just what law is to his social life. To reject the one in the interests of the other is to turn mental liberty into a cloke of maliciousness.

Lastly, Christ our Lord has made us morally free. He has broken the chains which fettered the human will. He has restored to the will its buoyancy and its power. Man was morally free in Paradise; but he became enslaved in consequence of an act of disobedience which we name the Fall. Man then forfeited the grace which had secured the balance and proportions of his nature in its earlier and purer stage; and he could not transmit to his descendants the gift which he had lost himself. Man's will lost its spring—lost its superiority to circumstances, lost its independence of passion, lost its lofty unlikeness to mere brute instinct. Man fell, more and more fatally under the dominion of surrounding nature—of his own lower nature—under the dominion of his senses enslaved by nature. He became by degrees what St. Paul describes him as being at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans. He was, in the

sternest sense of the term a slave, because the sovereign power within him—his will—had lost the secret of its freedom and was enslaved. How was he to be enfranchised? There came One to him and said—"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." What was lost to man was to be more than regained by Christ. Not merely was the penalty of the old transgressions to be paid, so that man was to be relieved from captivity, but his will was to be re-invigorated by a heaven-sent force, or Grace, placing it once more in harmony with the law of his highest life. St. Paul speaks of this, when he says that those whom Christ makes free become the servants, or slaves, of righteousness. There is no Oregon territory in the moral world—no tract of unoccupied neutral ground which runs between the frontier of the empire of Christ and the frontier of the empire of evil. They are conterminous to each other; and to be rescued from the one is to be at once a subject of the other.

It is objected here that moral freedom is not worth having, if it be but a service after all. "You talk to us of freedom," men say, "but what you really mean is restrictions—restrictions upon action, upon inclination, upon speech: You mean obligations—obligations to work, to self-discipline, to sacrifice one's self and others to all the details of the code of Christian duty." My brethren, you are right. Certainly we *do* mean that. The Christian does live under a system of restrictions and obligations. These prescribe for him just what his own heaven-sent nature would wish him to be—would wish him to do. No doubt they would be very irritating to the old nature which he has sloughed off—"the old Adam, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." But they are entirely acceptable to, and eagerly demanded by, the new man in him, "which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness." Therefore, whatever the Christian may be outwardly, he is inwardly an emancipated man. In obeying Christ's law he acts just as he likes to act; he acts according to that which he recognizes as the highest law of his life. He obeys Law, true—the law of his God; but then he has no inclination to disobey it. Obedience is not to him a yoke: disobedience would be to him a torture. His inclinations are in accordance with his highest duty, and that which frees him is itself a law. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," says St. Paul, "hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The Christian is, as St. Peter tells us to-day, the servant—in the original it is the slave—of God. But then, as he would not, for all that the world can give, be anything else, this service is perfect freedom.

The Antinomian plea that the rules and laws of the Christian life are enfringements upon liberty, is another way of making

liberty a cloke of maliciousness. Conscientiousness, regular habits of devotion, accuracy and painstaking in doing good to others and for others, and in the disposal of time, and in what we say in conversation, the avoidance not merely of sin, but of temptation to sin and bad company, are represented as inconsistent with freedom. Inconsistent they are with mere human impetuosity, with mere animal impatience of restraint—with that low notion of liberty which places it in the indulgence of our lower instincts at the cost of our higher ones. True freedom, is the power of acting without hindrance according to the higher law of our being. To do wrong, therefore, does not really assert our liberty; it degrades, it enslaves us. It may have been necessary—it was necessary—that we should have this power of doing wrong, in order to do right freely; but we forfeit our own freedom none the less if we do aught but right. A man is not really free—he is not really more free—because he steals, because he swears, because he commits murder. This false notion of liberty is the worst enemy of true liberty. Our highest liberty, depend upon it, is secured by our free and complete obedience to every detail of the Eternal Law..

Let us look up to our great Emancipator, Who was crucified and is throned in the heavens. After all, our freedom is His gift. But He has left us the power, the perilous power of forfeiting it, in order that we may, if we will retain it for His glory. Let us see that we do not forfeit it, by cloaking under it the maliciousness which repudiates Law. The laws of the land protect our social liberty. The laws of the faith—the laws of natural and revealed truth—protect our mental liberty. The moral laws of God protect our personal spiritual liberty. All true law meets in, and radiates from, the Divine Person of the Everlasting Christ, the Heir of the Father, the Eternal Legislator, our Deliverer from all political, intellectual and moral slavery. If we repudiate Law, we turn His gift of freedom against Himself. If through our willing obedience, we find in Law the countersign of our Freedom, we are—and in this way only can we be—"free indeed."

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis, University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 28, 1872.

"*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come.*"—St. John xvi, 12, 13.

All the Gospels appointed for the Sundays after Easter are taken from that according to St. John. One only—that for the first Sunday—belongs to the period which we are still commemorating, the forty days which passed between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ. The other four are from discourses of Christ pronounced before His crucifixion; the last three are from the one discourse pronounced in the supper room.

Historically speaking, then, these Gospels seem to be at first sight out of place, and in reading them we go back from Easter time to a time from which we are presumably separated by the Crucifixion and Resurrection; yet looking carefully at the contents of these Gospels we must see that they are strictly

in place. They are preparations for the real departure, and for that which shall follow it. They might have been spoken, so far as the matter goes—I am, of course, saying nothing of their immediate purpose—they might have been spoken during the great forty days just as well as on the eve of the Crucifixion. Our Lord has just referred to His approaching departure, and, as was natural, sorrow has filled the hearts of His disciples. In order to relieve their distress He proceeds to explain to them that His departure was not merely to be glorious for Himself but expedient for them. If He remained upon earth, the Holy Spirit the Comforter would not come to them. If He Himself remained among them continuously He could not even be the object of a purely spiritual apprehension, for where the sight is satisfied there is not sufficient room for faith; and so far there would be no reason for the aid of that Divine and invisible Friend who is the Author of all real faith in the soul of man. But if Christ departed, then faith would become necessary, as it would be possible; and our Lord promised to send Him who should be the author and giver of this faith. "If I depart I will send Him unto you."

When He comes, what will He do? First, He will achieve a moral victory over the world, and thus make the task of the Apostles easier. He will reprove the world of sin. He will convince it gradually but surely of the mistake, of the crime, of rejecting Jesus. Next He will reprove the world of righteousness. He will teach it that there does exist a higher ideal of righteousness than it had yet known; that the precepts of Christ are higher than any Pagan or Pharisaic idea which had yet come before it, because the Ascension will have demonstrated, even to sense, the righteousness of the ascended Christ. "Because I go to the Father." Lastly, He shall reprove the world of judgment. He will teach the world that the Crucifixion which seemed to be the very victory of the Evil One, was really his day of humiliation and of judgment; that, "the prince of this world is judged."

But what will He teach the Church? What will He say to those Apostles who believed in Him, and who followed Him, and who in losing Him appeared to be losing their all? This is the question more immediately before us.

Now, this question is partly answered by our Lord in the words of the text, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." And these words, mark you, have a double—that is to say, a doctrinal and a practical—significance. They teach us a great truth about Christian doctrine and they teach us one or more serious duties

of the Christian life. They shew us first of all that our Lord's own teaching during His sojourn upon the earth, did not embrace all necessary Christian doctrine.

Now, this is a point of great importance. It is not unusual to hear persons say in the present day "I am a Christian, but then I am a Christian in this sense: I accept, I believe, I obey, the very words of Christ. The words of Christ are enough for me; I want no more. The Apostles—St. Paul especially—taught certain doctrines which Christ Himself did not teach. I do not wish to be bound by those super-added doctrines. The Church in her Creeds, as elsewhere, has used language which I do not find in the words of Christ. I feel myself at liberty to reject that language. It is enough for me to read, to admire, to feel the beauty—the incomparable beauty—of the Sermon on the Mount. This is genuine; this is essential; this is real; this is the true and imperishable Christianity; the rest I consider, in different degrees, superfluous. It may be very well in its way, but it stands on a totally different footing. There can be no serious harm in rejecting it."

Now this language, in substance at least, has been used by one writer of recent notoriety, and it commends itself because it sounds at first so very loyal to our Lord. It seems to give implicit credit to His words; and all the more so, because it appears to refuse such credit to the words of all others; just as politeness from a particular individual to another is more remarked and remarkable, when the person who shews it is habitually uncivil to all the rest of the world. By using such language as this, men flatter themselves that they can do two things at once; that they can cut down the Christian creed to the very narrowest dimensions, and at the same time be all the better and more emphatically Christian for keeping strictly and exclusively to the teaching of Christ. It is, you see, a raid upon the claims of Faith, conducted in the name of an extraordinary reverence for the very Object of faith. And yet here to-day, as we listen to our Lord speaking in the Gospel, we find Him saying as plainly as He can, in this His last discourse, that He Himself did *not* undertake to teach in person *all* that was necessary for His disciples as Christians to know and to believe to their souls' health. He says clearly, that He had many things to tell His disciples which they could not bear at the time, and which He meant to tell them not at present in person but hereafter by the agency of another, the unseen Comforter, the Holy Spirit. After He had left the world, so far as His visible presence was concerned, He would still from His invisible home speak to man. By His Spirit He would speak in and through His Apostles. What the Apostles taught would be

His teaching, even though it should go beyond anything which He had actually said Himself. For He had not said all He meant to say. His work of teaching was to be finished by others. To the Apostles He said, "He that heareth you heareth Me; he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." The man therefore who should think himself a greater Christian for keeping only to the words of Christ, would—let us say it plainly—deceive himself. He cannot keep only to the words of Christ, if he keeps really to *all* the words of Christ, because among the words of Christ is the saying in the text, which states as clearly as possible that over and above Christ's own actual teaching, there were truths to be taught in His name and by His direct authority—truths which as coming from Him although by the mouth of the Apostles, other Christians were to receive and believe.

There are, indeed, other words of our Saviour in this very discourse which at first sight seem to be at variance with the statement that He had many things to say to His disciples which they could not bear at the time. "Henceforth," He said, "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I call you friends and for this reason; all things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you." Here, I say, there seems to be a contradiction of the statement in the text, that Christ had still many things to say to His disciples which they could not bear at the time, but there is no contradiction in reality. So far as confidence on His side went, our Lord trusted His disciples unreservedly. They were admitted to His most intimate councils. But on their side there was a want of spiritual comprehension. They were not yet able to receive all He had to tell them, and therefore He reserved till a later time what He was not willing to communicate at once. We understand this distinction in every day life. Many a man has a wife, a sister, a child, from whom he has literally no secrets whatever, but who is not, on that account, able to share all his practical or intellectual interests. He may be willing to confide everything, but he may know that to enter into an account of all his thoughts at once would be a sheer waste of time; he therefore imparts a portion but defers the further disclosure until a time when it is likely to be appreciated. He has already made it in spirit; He has made it in intention. He does not trust the less because He does not communicate secrets which would be unintelligible. The time will come—it will come soon enough—when what is now unintelligible will be understood.

Our Lord's teaching, then, was completed by that of the Holy Spirit. To see how this was done, we need not to-day go beyond

the limits of the New Testament. "He shall take of Mine," said our Lord, "and shall shew it unto you." Our Lord gave the germ which the Apostles, as the mouth-pieces of the Holy Spirit, expanded into doctrines. Our Lord spoke, for instance, of the necessity which lay upon the Messiah that He should die, in order to correspond with the words of prophecy. "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him." He spoke of the blood of the Messiah as the blood of the New Testament, which was to be shed for the disciples. In the Apostolic writings this is expanded into the Doctrine of the Atonement. By Christ's death men are represented as being brought back from the captivity of sin and death. A propitiation for our sins, and the sins of the whole moral world, is represented as being offered by the free self-sacrifice of the Perfect Christ; and thus between God and man a peace, or reconciliation, is really effected. We are accepted if we believe.

Our Lord had hinted at a new ground of acceptance with God in His parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, in His eulogy upon the Publican, who went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee—in His precept "When ye have done all that is required of you, say we are unprofitable servants." But in St. Paul's writings we find set forth and elaborated in full, the doctrine of Salvation through Christ, as contrasted with the previously existing notion of Salvation through strict and literal obedience to the Jewish Law. "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." That is one side of the doctrine. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." That is the other side of the doctrine.

Again, in the visit of the Eastern Sages to the Manger of Bethlehem; in the account of the Syro-Phœnician woman; in the interview with the Greeks at the Passover; in the statement that the Good Shepherd had other sheep that were not of the fold of Israel, but which He must bring in, and make one fold, under one Shepherd; we have hints that the Pagan nations were to have their part, somehow, in the Divine Saviour. In St. Paul's writings we find the express assertion that a spiritual revelation had been made to him to the effect that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of the promises in Christ by the Gospel. The entire equality of Pagan and Jewish converts within the Church of the New Testament was thus based upon hints in our Lord's own language and practice, but only drawn out into a sharply defined doctrine by His great Apostle

Once more Our Lord spoke about Himself, about His sinlessness, about His claims on human thought and human affection,

about His power of enlightening and saving human beings, about His future coming to judge all human beings—in a way which we should think very extraordinary in any good man now-a-days, and, indeed, fatal to his claim to goodness, because inconsistent with presumable sober fact. Yet there is no denying the tremendous self-assertion of Christ our Lord, so varied as it is, so persistent, so unflinching. He does not—He will not present Himself as the prophets had done, only to teach men truths about God and duty, and then to withdraw Himself from their hearing and sight as quietly as possible—He came to proclaim Himself, to exhibit Himself, to draw all hearts, all eyes towards Himself, as the Way, the Truth and the Life to man; as the Light of the world, as He who should come to be the King and Judge of all. He teaches that He is Himself, in the last resort—the subject of His own doctrines. He reveals that He Himself is His principal revelation. "All men," He says, "are to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." "He who hath seen Me," again He says, "hath seen the Father." What could such language mean? How was it to be explained? If it was considered unjustifiable, what claim could the speaker have upon the love and trust of men? If it was considered as really justifiable, literally justifiable in the person of Christ, it could clearly only have been upon the ground that He was more than man; and if He was more than man, then what was He? Were such claims as these to be admitted on behalf of any created being; any angel or archangel; seraph or cherub? Or, was He, indeed of that uncreated and Eternal Essence which all creatures should adore as the source and end of all derived existence? Here it was that the Holy Spirit took up the words of Christ and shewed the truth to the Apostles. These words admitted, in the last analysis, only of one explanation. The speaker, if he was to be received at all, was in deed and truth Divine. And accordingly the Colossians were taught that "He created all things, that He was before all things, and that by Him all things consist," as we have heard in this afternoon's lesson; and the Romans, that He was "God over all blessed for ever;" and the Philippians, that to Him "men, and angels, and all beneath should bow in reverence;" the Hebrews, that He was "the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." And St. John, "in the Spirit, on the Lord's day," sees Him enthroned as the Lamb indeed, slain, and yet glorified, while all the highest intelligences of heaven prostrate themselves before Him and join in the "new song" of adoration around His throne.

The disciples could not have borne the full splendour of these

truths when they listened to the Sermon on the Mount, or for a long time afterwards. And yet these truths were the only real justification for the Sermon on the Mount. To assume a power to revise the law given from Sinai, or even to approve and ratify that law, implied that the speaker was one who claimed to be equal in authority with Him who gave that law to Moses. These things understood not the disciples at first; but after Jesus had been glorified, and the Spirit had been given, it became clear what was really meant. In the human sense of the words, no man could say that Jesus was the Lord; but when the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth came, He guided men into all truth.

So in many other instances, these illustrations of the Divine person of Jesus Christ, might be immensely extended, but enough has been said to shew that if the New Testament is to be believed as a whole, our Lord's teaching was *incomplete;* and further, that He Himself knew it, and meant it to be so.

And this brings me to the second and concluding part of the subject, Why was our Lord's teaching thus incomplete; incomplete according to His own will and announcement? Why did He not Himself teach all that could be properly called Christian doctrine? Why did He content Himself with laying the foundation of His religion, leaving the building to be finished according to His own express design and appointment by other hands?

The answer is that the same motives which led Him to teach men at all, led Him also to impose these limits, and restraints, and delays upon His process of teaching. He taught men to emerge from their ignorance because He loved them too well to leave them in it. He taught men gradually, and as they were able to bear the strong light of truth, because He loved men too well to shock or to blind them by the sudden blaze of that truth, for which in its fulness they were as yet unprepared. He did not expect that if the Christian revelation was placed before men at the first in its completeness they could receive it; because He knew what was in man. He knew the deep-rooted prejudices of education; He knew the power of fixed mental habit; He knew the force of the associations of younger days; He knew what the traditions of a great religion can do to destroy all the receptive power the flexibility in the soul of man, and therefore He was too wise and too considerate to expect so much of him. Just as the Sun does not flash forth in a moment out of the darkness of night, but gives warning of his approach, and then rises gradually and diffuses a vast body of light before we see him rise in all his glory above the line of the horizon; so it was with our Saviour. The full understanding of who He was, and

what He came to do, was preceded by a kind of twilight. That twilight was itself His own work, and it brightened more and more, moment by moment, towards the day. He rose amid the mists of imperfect apprehensions—and misapprehensions —as to who and what He was; and not until He was high in the heavens did He permit the full truth to break upon the intelligence of the world. In this He was true to God's providential action throughout human history. All along the course of the ages, God has taught men gradually. The heathen nations were taught, what little truth they knew amongst their mass of errors, by a succession of great minds raised up each one of them, in the providence of God, to advance them a single step towards the light, as men who had so long lived in darkness could bear it.

The Jewish Scriptures consisted of a long series of revelations, comprising first the Patriarchal, then the Mosaic, and then the Prophetical, each an advance upon its predecessor, and all leading up to the final and complete revelation of God in Christ. When He who had in divers ways spoken to the fathers by the prophets, in the last days of the world's history, as they seemed to the writer, spake by His Son.

This gradual unfolding of the mind of God throughout all the ages, to the last great revelation that He made, is based throughout, at every step of it upon His tender and loving consideration for human weakness. "I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now," is written over every earlier and imperfect revelation; not to depreciate its value, but to explain why it is not fuller than it is; to shew why God, who has thus spoken, is silent until He speaks again.

And now observe the practical lessons which follow from this.

What should be the true principle of the religious education of children and uninstructed persons? To be solid, all such education should be gradual. It should be given only as the learner's mind becomes acclimatized to the atmosphere of religious truth. Our Lord's tenderness in teaching religious truth only as men could bear it, was copied by the Apostles. We find distinctions drawn between the various grades. First, we have the "babes in Christ," those who were just beginning to learn the first lessons of Christian truth and duty. Then we come to the strong and perfect men who have completed, or ought to have completed their Christian education. To the first was given that elementary form of Christian instruction which from its easiness of reception the Apostle terms "milk." To the second was imparted a much more comprehensive instruction in the mysteries of the Christian Creed and in the range of Christian

duty; and this the Apostle, keeping up the metaphor, terms "strong meat."

This double order of teaching so instituted by the Apostles, passed at once into the practice of the Christian Church, and the catechumens, that is the early converts, were treated differently from the faithful who after Baptism and Communion were in full fellowship with the whole life and thought of the Christian Church. The catechumens it was judged, could only bear one form of spiritual nourishment, but the faithful would be satisfied with nothing less than an altogether different diet. This principle, this prudent principle, holds good of secular education. It is too much lost sight of in some of the modern methods. In these days the old and deeper idea of education as a means of training and exercising the faculties of the mind so as to enable the educated boy or man, to deal with any subject that might come before him in the way of duty has been abandoned, only too largely for that modern idea of education, which simply loads the pupil's mind with huge quantities of unmastered and unmanageable learning, and not seldom becomes the fruitful cause of severe cases of intellectual indigestion. Boys are expected to know something about everything. In the effort to achieve universal knowledge, they arrive at knowing nothing thoroughly. And the consequence is that, while they can talk with striking and unnatural facility on a great many more subjects than boys did forty or fifty years ago, their mental faculties are really less braced and sharpened, and their actual capacity, it is to be feared, for meeting the requirements of life, is considerably less than that of their predecessors.

So in teaching religious truth, parents are not unfrequently apt to fall into the same mistake. They want to teach everything at once: they end by teaching nothing. They manage to forget the primary and necessary duty of every teacher, that of placing himself by an act of sympathy and imagination as nearly as he possibly can, in the mental position of the pupil or child. They think chiefly, or only of what interests themselves in religion; not of what might be interesting or intelligible to minds just opening into life, and catching, with no little difficulty, the horizons of truth and duty which first meet its gaze. They are interested in this or that controversy of the day, and they expect their children to be interested also. They are accustomed to express themselves on religious subjects in such and such abstract phraseology and they expect their children to understand it. They have arrived at this or that idea or impression most precious in itself as to the heinousness of Sin—as to the value of our Lord's work—as to the signs of God's favour bestowed upon more or less holy souls, and they expect

their children to do so too. But what is the consequence? Either the children are alienated from all real religion when they grow up, owing to the thoughtless but well-meant eagerness with which, without anything to make it intelligible—without any adequate interpretation—it has been thrust on them in their earliest years; or else these children learn that most fatal of all the lessons that can be learnt in connection with religion, to talk about it easily, without thinking what they say. They learn to allow religious *phrases*, to outrun religious thoughts, religious conviction and purposes, and so they create a habit of insincerity in dealing with the most serious of all subjects; which is only too certain in the long run, depend upon it, to sap the springs of real faith and life.

One practical lesson from this is to bear in mind that up to our very last day, God is teaching each one of us through the action of other minds,—through all the events of life. Each successive stage of life up to the very last, leaves some truth untaught. Down to the end of the very longest life, some truth may be learnt that was untaught before. We are daily adding to our experience. We never till we draw our last breath complete our education. As in the first flush of youth we exult in a sense of animal vivacity or of mental buoyancy, Christ from His throne of justice and truth looks down and says, "I have many things to say to thee young man, or young woman, but thou canst not bear them now." If He were to teach us all at once, compressing into one awful and overwhelming lesson all the stern and varied experiences of the future, it would be too much for us to bear; too much for our weakness; too much for our proneness to despair. What life is and means as the very threshold of Eternity. What are the high and sacred uses of its disappointments and its sufferings? Why it is better to suffer for doing what is right than to succeed by doing what is wrong. What the events, the persons, and the things of Time are worth when compared with the Eternal realities? These, the deepest lessons of life; lessons which can only be learned gradually, and in most cases painfully. Friends die; health becomes weak; life loses year by year, its early promise; the brilliant spring-tide issues in a hot and arid summer, in a prosaic and darkening autumn; and thus at each step the soul is thrown back from the outward and the passing, upon the inward and the Eternal. Gradually and imperceptibly one truth leads the way in the mind to another; one difficulty surmounted or interpreted, shews the way to explain and overmaster another. It would have seemed impossible beforehand; so we think, as we look back; but as a fact, God has taught us all the more surely because He did not teach us all this at once;—

because He is so tender, so deliberate, as we have often thought, so hesitating in giving us His successive lessons. We think, it may be of the right hand and of the left in our early day dreams, but He waits for us by the way to tender to us at His own time, the cup of which He drank Himself, to administer the baptism with which He was baptized. What can the soul do but breathe the prayer;—

> "Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom
> Lead Thou me on.
> Keep Thou my feet. I do not ask to see
> The distant scene. One step's enough for me."

He has many things to say to us which we cannot bear as yet; but *He* knows best *when* life's deepest lessons will be most needed by us. We have only to do two things; to listen for His voice, and to obey it.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.

PREACHED IN ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, BATTERSEA PARK,

On Sunday, May 26, 1872.

(At the General Ordination of the Lord Bishop of Winchester.)

For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry awhile with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." 1 Corinthians xvi, 7-9.

It is from incidental passages like these in the Apostle's writings that we obtain the deepest and most vivid insight into the writer's mind and character. Amongst uninspired writings it is not in formal depositions or official documents that that which constitutes personal character and life makes itself felt. Few persons, I apprehend, would be found disposed to endorse the paradox of a modern historian who tells us, that the character of King Henry the Eighth is to be studied most advantageously in the preambles to his Acts of Parliament. The great charm of private correspondence, and the one reason which can in many

cases justify or explain its publication is, that it is a revelation of human character. In their public capacities, two men of profoundly different character will say exactly the same thing, and in the same way, the truth being, that for the time, all personal characteristics are dropped. It is the office, or the circumstances, or the necessities of the case that really speaks. It is not the man. In private correspondence however you see a man as he is. He writes what he thinks, and what he feels from moment to moment. His enthusiasm, his impulses, his hopes, his fears, his attractions and repulsions are all represented by turns. They are uttered without design, or, more correctly perhaps, they escape from him in spite of himself, and as you read you feel that you are in contact, not with a formal and systematic composition, but with the soul of the writer; the soul in all its strength, or in all its weakness, in all its thoroughness, or all its inconsistency, in all its inertness, or all its energy and resolution.

Now, it is one of the greatest attractions of St. Paul's epistles, that while they embody the great and essential doctrines of Christianity, they also abound in those incidental passages or elements which keep the character and figure of the writer continually before us. It is this which enables us all, but especially those of us who have succeeded in whatever measure or degree in furthering the Apostle's work, to feel towards him as a personal friend, just as if eighteen centuries did not divide him from us; just as though we had him now here with us in London or Southwark, or we were back with him in one of the ancient cities of the Levant.

The passage before us well illustrates this observation. The Apostle reveals his intention to remain in Ephesus until the Pentecost, and thus shows to us a feature of his character, well worthy of our consideration upon an occasion like the present. "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."

Now here we have first of all, an announcement of the decision the Apostle had come too, and secondly, the reasons upon which that decision is based. In the determination of the Apostle to remain at Ephesus till Pentecost, let us recognize first, the Apostle's power or faculty of making up his mind in the face of strong counter-balancing motives. There was enough in the nature and circumstances of his life at this time to have made him desirous to leave Ephesus at a moment's notice when he wrote these lines. It would have been easy to frame a long catalogue of reasons, each of which would have exercised over the mind of any man, but such as the Apostle Paul, an almost commanding power, St. Paul, as has been pointed out

by a recent critic, had come back to Ephesus from a visit to Corinth, and he had arrived in low spirits. He had gone on account of the state of the Corinthian Church, of which he had heard a bad account, but had found matters worse than he expected. In an Epistle, which has been lost to us, he had ordered that certain members whose conduct had been the cause of great public scandal should be excluded from the Church. The Church, too, was divided by the bitterest party spirit. That portion of the Christian community which desired to retain as much as possible of the old law of the Jews was attempting to undermine the teaching of St. Paul, whom they considered too enthusiastic. Others, although he was a pupil of Gamaliel, could discover nothing interesting in his teaching. Another party refused allegiance in several matters of Church Government, while a fourth section denied all connection with his party, and applied to a higher name for a head, thus showing that they had carried party spirit to a greater pitch of narrowness than the rest. There was also a party—whether known to the Apostle or not it is impossible to say—which denied the resurrection of the dead, and regarded the Gospel teaching as a kind of refined Epicureanism. This party though professing to be connected with the Church lived in open opposition to her teachings. The Law Courts again were constantly occupied with suits brought against one another by litigious members of the community; the gifts of the Holy Spirit were made into occasions for the exhibition of the pettiest of personal disputes; and Christian women, forgetting their higher instincts, and the customs of their country which embodied those instincts, came forward unveiled to make public speeches in the assemblies of the Church. It seemed as if the Greek character and nature, brilliant but paradoxical, had carried all their resources of finesse and intrigue, all their genius for controversy, and all their profound distaste for personal improvement, into the heart of the Church at Corinth. The Apostle may well have felt that he ought to be on the spot where there was so much mischief to prevent, and to cure. It must have cost him much pain, with all his burning sympathy for his Master's cause, to have set aside the claims of Corinth even for six weeks. But still he did, though he must have known that there was one voice to which all the Church there would listen; one heart to which all would sooner or later respond; one will to which all would bend. His presence at Corinth was of the first necessity, but there was a higher necessity for him to be elsewhere, so he struck the balance at once. Indecision may be a characteristic of a weak mind, but in this case the Apostle looked at the matter in the practical way every one

who has a mission for advancing the religion of Christ must do. For we have to work for a cause which can never be universally popular and in the presence of an enemy who never sleeps, and by whom any errors we may commit are certainly and immediately taken advantage of.

There is no doubt that prompt decision as to the right course is at times a matter of the greatest difficulty, but we who serve Christ Jesus our Lord in a sense different from other men, dare not abdicate the duty—the great duty—of decision. If rash resolution be wrong, the absence of all resolution is not right. The man asserts his innate manhood, the Christian puts forth the power of the indwelling Christ, when feeling that God's eye is upon him, and that he shall one day stand before the great Judgment Seat, he makes up his mind upon this matter of great importance; when taking all his passions, feelings, hopes, fears, ambitions, and enthusiasms well in hand, he proclaims from amidst the very chaos of tumult within him, the sentence of that sovereign faculty of his race, the sentence of his will — of a will placed under the guidance of a well instructed conscience. St. Paul has told us in one place, "I find a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me; for I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin which is in my members," but here we see him, not hesitating, not irresolutely parleying with countervailing motives, still less resistlessly yielding the mastery to impulse, but forming his purpose calmly. His resolution is formed, but yet he has it well in hand. He knows how far to let the reins go and when to draw them in, and he says, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost."

Now, upon what reasons was this decision founded? Upon two; and of these the first is the greatness of the opportunity afforded by the approaching festival of Pentecost at Ephesus. St. Paul in his vivid and expressive way calls the opportunity a "door," by which he hoped might enter all those who were nearest and dearest to his heart. Nay he intensifies his metaphor almost at the risk of destroying it, for he tells us it is not only a "great door" but that it is "effectual," as if the whole act were instinct with its motive, as though it were impossible for the Apostle not to endeavour to make the most of every opportunity. It had not always been thus at Ephesus. St. Paul must have heard much about the fervid teaching of the eloquent Apollos, following upon the labours of Aquila and Priscilla, but yet it must have cheered his heart to have the prospect of baptizing more converts to the influence of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly

he resolved to stay at Ephesus, and he made the Jewish Synagogue in that city the starting point of his activity. Saturday after Saturday for three months, he went there preaching and arguing —holding what in these times we should call a series of "Conferences."—upon the religion of God, and salvation through Jesus Christ. As a pupil of Gamaliel he well knew the way to approach the hearts of his countrymen. He knew that the kingdom of the Messiah, as shadowed forth in the sacred writings, was a very different thing from the hard, dry, political institution, the idea of which was then popular among the Jews

But though St. Paul preached to ears which did not mean to be convinced, and though the Ephesians would not do justice to the preacher, they could not afford to treat him with contempt. Accordingly his preaching was denounced with insult. It was then that he determined to separate himself from the main body of the Jews, and thenceforth he taught his disciples in one of those side wings or buildings usually attached to the public baths and gymnasiums, and which was frequented by Tyrannus, who was probably a teacher of rhetoric. There he was day by day, sometimes speaking to Pagans, and sometimes to his own countrymen, upon the nature and claims of the Gospel. There would be found men from all parts of Asia to which the news of St. Paul's teaching had penetrated, and there would be discussed the miracles and remarkable events that we read of in the Acts of the Apostles; the public discomfiture of the seven sons of the priest Sceva, who attempted to make use of the sacred name of Jesus in their incantations; and the burning of the costly books filled with the recipes of the magicians. It was felt in fact that a new moral force had gone forth from that spot, and society was fermenting all round. No one would have felt this more than St. Paul. "A great door and effectual (he says) is opened unto me." The whole mass of Jewish thought was heaving with agitation before his mind's eye. Men were asking all round him, What was really truth; what was worth living for; what was worth dying for—if there were any such thing at all?—There was a wish to base life, if it could be done, upon a moral rock of some kind. There was an impatience of all that was not real. These effects were not the Gospel itself, but they were preparatory for the Gospel. The soil had to be broken up by these means before the heavenly seed could be sown with any probability of growth. It is no slight part of our responsibility to make the most of every opportunity for doing our Master's work. It is not too much to say that every one of us has some such opportunities sooner or later. We may have perhaps to work at first without encouragement in the synagogue, but a school of Tyrannus comes to all of us at last. To fail to make the most of

our opportunity when it does come is possible enough from our human weakness; but to fail to try; to make no effort to comprehend that the opportunity has arrived, to be content to glide down the stream of life as though there was nothing particular in it, nothing that would have any bearing upon our highest good or that of others, implies some grave disease in our moral and spiritual constitution, if not indeed that deadly apathy for which the stern realities of spiritual life and death have no meaning. St. Paul, according to all testimony, was constantly saying or doing something, and that he was constantly succeeding was for this among other reasons, that he was always alive to opportunities of success.

The second reason given by the Apostle for remaining at Ephesus until the Pentecost was the difficulty of the situation. "There, said he, are many adversaries." To begin with, there were of course the Jews of the synagogue, who would not have forgotten the circumstances which had led to the secession of the school of Tyrannus. Then there would be the mass of turbulent spirits reduced to something like decorum by military force but always ready to break out again, and who could command the services of some powerful adherents. Already the Apostle discerned the coming storm. He did not suppose for a moment that the religion of the Crucified One could make itself a home with that joyous, pleasure-seeking, easy-tempered, and superstitious population without a struggle. Sooner or later it must come into conflict with the classes who were deeply concerned in abasing it even to the death. There were at this time a large number of skilled workmen who lived by making miniature copies of the inner shrine of the Temple of Diana. These copies were purchased by visitors and placed as ornaments upon the tables or elsewhere in the interior of the houses of the wealthy All these men were of course interested in preventing the triumph of Christianity. They were bound to the worship of Diana by the double tie of old association and commercial enterprise, and such a combination in favour of any very good or very bad system is, as a matter of experience, always exceedingly strong Then, again the working men throughout Asia Minor as shown by some inscriptions that have been only lately discovered, were almost universally enrolled in guilds or trades unions, so that when the interests of any particular trade were assailed, nothing was easier than to arouse opposition of a very serious kind. St. Paul well knowing of the existence of fraternities of men like Demetrius, must have had reason to anticipate such scenes as the riot at the theatre being at least very probable. But the thought of coming difficulties acted only as a stimulus to him to take advantage of this opportunity for Christian work and

Christian virtue. For what does virtue mean but manly moral force put forward under difficulties, in accordance with the rule of right, and put forward more frequently when surrounded by such difficulties. In fact difficulty is necessary to the full development of virtue, just as the soft atmosphere of unimpeded success fosters slowly, yet surely, moral effeminacy and moral decay. Therefore it was that St. Paul looked at these "many adversaries" not only as being no drawback, but as a positive attraction. They raised within him not any mere spirit of natural brute combativeness, but that spiritualized military temper which he tells us in his Epistle to the Ephesians is one great characteristic of the true Christian. He was a soldier by profession and had become a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He therefore felt that it was a good thing to be on the field of battle and taking note of the strength of the enemy. For every opponent there was a possible convert; every opponent there, was at any rate in the last resort but an impotent antagonist. "Who shall separate us, he cries at last, from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But, my brethren, this solemn occasion speaks for itself. Words are often out of place when men's hearts are full; when there is much that flits before the eye of the soul which words cannot compass. Those of us who are here this morning as candidates for ordination will understand something of that which St. Paul speaks of in the text. Like him we have arrived at a conclusion. We have made up our minds upon a matter that binds us for life, just as he made up his mind to remain six weeks longer in his Master's service at Ephesus. God help us now and hereafter to say "I have paid Thee my vows which I promised with my lips and spake with my heart."

There may be much to plead for our following other lines of life. We do not deny that there are ways of serving God in secular employments, and that secular employments may be hallowed by religious motives. But we have chosen our Ephesus. We have put our hands to the plough, and by God's grace we will not look back. We want no "Clerical Disabilities' Act" to relieve us from what is a voluntary and most welcome service. We have put on the uniform of the Captain of our Salvation, the sacrificed Saviour, and we will wear no other for all the world can give.

But "there are many adversaries." Certainly there are. The man who takes Holy Orders in the present day does so under very different circumstances from those who did so forty, twenty, or even ten years ago. It is undeniably more difficult to meet a clergyman's responsibilites now than formerly. More is expected in personal exertion and in ministerial efficiency and ability. The air, too, is filled with controversies which may be approached in many ways, but which can only be handled in the eye of eternal truth in one way. The Romish Church has never confronted the English Church upon so serious a scale as now in every rank of society. Nonconformity and Infidelity have never before so united their forces against all our efforts to give education to the people. The future is pregnant with possibilities. Who will attempt to say what will be the outward status of the Church of England twenty or even ten years hence? Who can look forward now as our forefathers may be assumed to have done, to a settled order of events which shall outlast our time, which shall subsist almost unimpaired when we shall have gone to our account? Out of those days of tranquil and assured repose, we have—it is God's will and providence—passed into this very different period when all around us betrays a foolish impatience of what has been, and what is; when change, as change, is spoken of as if it had an inherent, I had almost said a sacramental, virtue; when blasts of destructive infidel thought sweep though the intellectual atmosphere, paralyzing in numbers of simple souls—even of most devout members—some of the most venerable memories and affections of our Church; when men are accustomed to look at favourably, to think of patiently, and even in some cases to welcome, the public abandonment and repudiation of some of the most authoritative and sacred landmarks of our Faith.

This is a time, too, when moral and social ideas are not less challenged than higher and eternal truths; when Society, if it speak its mind, is profoundly troubled and haunted by a terrible suspicion that it may yet have to reckon with foes more serious than any it has encountered since it rose a thousand years ago out of the chaos of barbarous life. And yet beyond any other class of men who deal, or ought to deal, with the gravest problem of the world of thought,—who are or ought to be more directly or intimately interested than any other class of men in the material as well as the spiritual well-being of the people, the Clergy must be instinctively alive to these grave questions. As a matter of fact, I can say from experience, they do deter many men who in other days would have taken Holy Orders, from doing so now. Do not let us forget this.

But it is better thus. The strength of the Church does not consist in the number of pages of its "Clerical Directory," but in the sum total of moral and spiritual force which she has at command. It is well that we should look upon the difficulties of our time as far as we can, as did St. Paul in his.

They are, I dare to say, as nothing to the man who has an honest heart and a good positive belief. For after all, my brethren, why is it that we do take Orders? Is it not because we believe and are assured that eighteen centuries ago, an event, or a series of events occured, compared with which all that has since occurred, all that can possibly happen even in *our* eventful days, must be utterly insignificant? Is it not that like St. Paul at Ephesus, we believe and are sure that the Everlasting Son of God really entered this world under the ordinary conditions of space and time, and died upon the Cross for the sins of all men? That He arose from the grave where they had laid Him when He was really dead? That He ascended to the heavenly throne and has been there pleading for us ever since, and is doing so at this moment? That God has given us His Spirit and His Sacraments? Is it not because we are convinced that out of the infinite treasury of His love He has done this for us—for each of us,—and that the very least we can do is to yield Him our most free and cheerful services under such circumstances as He may will, in storm or in sunshine, in battle or in repose, in the times of hopefulness, or in the days of despondency? To say that it matters little when or where, is surely but to say that when seen with a nearer horizon, the tangled web of Ecclesiastical and Political change dwarfs down to its true proportions, and that we shall see nothing before us but Christ crucified, and souls perishing all around from lack of knowledge, or lack of grace; that it must be our duty, as it was the duty of our predecessors, the duty of the great Apostle himself, the grand duty of each one of us, to bring them within our reach by whatever moral or intellectual instruments we can command; to lead them to the foot of the atoning Cross; to get them a share in the sprinkling of the cleansing blood; to make them know something of that power and wisdom of God which will be to the end of time a stumbling block to the self-righteous, and foolishness to the self-opiniated.

For this blessed work, blessed in its usefulness to others, blessed in its reflex effects upon those who undertake it earnestly, and in humble dependence upon God's grace, we have now, I dare to say, great opportunities. The difficulties of our time will not stop us; they will rather stimulate and assist us. The evils attending this great work, if we must call them so, are not so formidable after all. Rome has recently by her own act condemned herself to the task of advocating the infallibility of a

long list of conflicting and self-contradictory facts and things. Puritanism—to regard our work in all its phases—while it still clutches the pietest formulas of its earlier and better times with convulsive eagerness, is more and more surely forfeiting its own vitality as it sinks down year by year into that pit of scepticism which its stern refusal of the sacramental uses, graces, and doctrines of the Church has already undeniably prepared for it. And so of those other forms of thought which are the implacable enemies of all belief in the name of God and a divine Christ; they cannot in the long run satisfy a being like Man, who has within himself the instinctive presentiment, and the ineffaceable evidence of his own immortality; Man for whom the ideas of moral light, and coming judgment, ideas which God, revealed in Christ, can alone adequately explain and satisfy, can never be resolved into "a mere sentiment."

The state of things around us now, therefore, is in our favour. We have a better chance of gaining a hearing for our Divine Master than our predecessors of former days, when thought was stagnant, and habits and manners fixed; when men frequently were what they were for no other reason but a traditional one; when critics and theorists had not exercised themselves upon the problems which to-day agitate the human mind, without affording the Truth even an opportunity of speaking for itself, and then of triumphing. Those who are farthest from the Truth have often profound, though yet undeveloped and unrecognized sympathies with it. The King of the intellectual world, Jesus Christ, is ever ruler, even in the midst of His enemies, and the conditions of human life do not alter. Men live, and suffer, and die just as they did 1800 years ago. The real significance of this short and mysterious passage which we call Life is not obliterated by material civilization, or by the mental theories of our day.

God grant, my brethren, that be the scene of your labours what and where it may, you may teach and act,—that we may all teach and act,—as men who know that they are ministering as dying men to dying men; and so that your lives' anxieties and your light afflictions which are but for a moment—should such in God's providence await you—may work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory through the boundless grace and mercy of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

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"*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*"—1 Corinthians xii, 1.

Like the world at large, the Church of Christ has had in every age of its existence a certain number of what would now be called "questions of the day" under discussion. Some points as to the nature of its work amongst human souls, or as to its constitution, or as to its doctrines, or as to its formularies, or as to its relations to human society at large, or as to its relations to the public thought of the time, have been raised and brought prominently before the minds of men—have been discussed with more or less warmth until at length a settlement has been arrived at.

When St. Paul wrote this Epistle there were several questions of this kind in the Church at Corinth. There was one as to how to deal with a gross criminal case; another as to the dress and behaviour of Christian women; another respecting the administration of the ordinance of the Holy Communion; a fourth as to the advisability of marriage under certain circumstances; and this question respecting what were then termed the "Spiritual gifts." When St. Paul says "that he would not have the Corinthians ignorant concerning spiritual gifts," he certainly does

not mean that he would not have them ignorant of the whole matter. There was, for them at least, very little danger or probability of that, because at least within the Church at Corinth, it is clear enough that this question of the spiritual gifts would be daily discussed, and with no little eagerness. But St. Paul's expression (which occurs also elsewhere) is an intentionally reserved one. It expresses something less than the writer's whole meaning, while yet it suggests that meaning most fully to his readers. St. Paul means that he is very anxious indeed that the Corinthians should have an accurate and complete knowledge about these gifts, about their origin, about their purpose, about their importance.

Now the particular gifts to which St. Paul was referring at Corinth, were not exactly, as a whole, like anything that is to be witnessed in the Church of Christ at the present day. They were not, indeed, mere miracles, because, strictly speaking, nothing can be more miraculous than any act whereby the Divine and Eternal Spirit infuses into the created soul some quality or grace which it did not before possess—such, for instance, as love or peace—but looked at from without, they were much more striking. They produced effects which challenged the attention of the eye and the ear, and were calculated to fire the imagination. St. Paul mentions nine of these gifts in his letters to the Corinthians. Of these the "word of knowledge," the "word of wisdom to prophecy," were such as might be found, to no inconsiderable extent, diffused through the Church of Christ at the present day. The "word of wisdom" would seem to mean an eminent power of apprehending revealed truth in its relation towards the general field of human thought and human knowledge, or,—as we should say,—of apprehending it philosophically. The "word of knowledge" implies an insight, more or less profound, into the several departments of revealed truth, and into their mutual relations towards each other; while "prophecy" means not simply the power of predicting the future (though it does mean that), but especially the power of stating truth and duty clearly and forcibly to others. And the "gift of faith" here mentioned would be, probably, something distinct from the faith of ordinary believers, a kind of extraordinary illumination of the believing soul, making God and the world unseen so vividly present to it, that all obstacles to duty seem for the time straightway to vanish; for as our Lord says, "such a faith removes mountains." This, too, is to be found in some gifted Christians in all ages of the Church.

The five other gifts are at least less ordinary. There were Christians at Corinth who had the gift of healing, and others, the more extraordinary gift of working miracles. These were plainly cases in which the fire of the Holy Ghost, possessing, enlighten-

ing, and warming the believing soul, made itself felt through the soul and body of the believer, and produced effects for which no known natural causes could account.

Others, had the gift of discerning spirits—something deeper, that is than a mere insight into character—although analagous to this, great and not uncommon gift; a power they had of seeing in other souls the exact endowment with which the Holy Spirit had furnished them,—what in them was really the work of grace,—what only the counterfeit of nature.

Others were given to speak with unknown tongues, probably, as at the Pentecost, in foreign languages, sometimes, with a view to missionary work among the strangers who were to be found about the port and in the streets of Corinth; probably also, and more frequently still, in a mystic language, to which no known human tongue would correspond, yet one in which the illuminated and entranced soul might alone at times be able to express itself. Others, again, had the gift of interpreting tongues—it may be foreign languages—more probably it was the mystic language of devotion, which but for the gifted interpreter would have died away upon the ear of the audience without leaving even an idea behind.

It was natural that the exercise of such endowments as these should have led to much discussion at Corinth, where the subject was practically and frequently brought before the eyes and ears of Christians. Questions were eagerly asked; they were often hastily and erroneously answered; they were at last referred to the Apostle. They were such as these, "Did all these gifts come from the same source, or were some of them from below and some from above? Were they all equally important, and if not, which were the most important? Was not the striking and extraordinary gift of tongues, at least, entitled to greater admiration than the comparatively commonplace gift of preaching and prophecying; and if so, was it not hard that some Christians should have gifts of the higher order, and others only those of the lower order; that some should be the eyes and hands of the Church, others its feet or less honourable members? Would not, it was asked—would not the possessors of the great gifts of speculative and administrative power in the Church, be eyed with a certain amount of unavoidable jealousy by the possessors of humbler if not less useful endowments? And, if so, were not those gifts after all, of very doubtful advantage to the Church? Was it not perhaps a mistake to think so much of them? Might they not, conceivably, some of them, have belonged even to heathen necromancers, who while they appeared to think and act miraculously, yet in private called Jesus Christ accursed? And if so, was it not prudent, at the least, to treat them as matters of inconsiderable importance?"

Now St. Paul answers these questions, and in doing so he lays down principles of vital and permanent importance.

First, he tells us that every good gift even the very least is important, because they all come from a single source, the Divine and Eternal Spirit living and working in the Church of Christ. There are diversities of gifts, but they are from the same Spirit. There are diversities of administration, but it is the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, who worketh all in all.

Secondly, he rules that the gifts do differ in importance, and that each must be valued by its practical value to the soul, and to the Church of Christ. On this account he decides that the gift of tongues, which excited such extraordinary enthusiasm at Corinth, is really a less important gift than the comparatively quiet and tame gift of preaching and prophecy, simply because the latter is of greater service to others—of greater service to the Church.

Thirdly, he will not allow that the possession of any gift whatever ought to make the possessor an object of jealousy. Being a gift, it implies no sort of merit in the possessor at all, but only in the Giver. It is given, too, not for the advantage, not for the credit of the possessor, but simply for the good of the Church at large. No gift accordingly could be possessed by the heathen, outside the Church, who cursed the blessed name of Jesus; and no gift rendered its possessors independent of others in the holy body of the Church, nor could be wholly monopolized for the advantage of the possessor. The eye could not possibly say to the foot "I have no need of thee."

And, lastly, all these gifts were inferior to those which were shared by all Christians—even the very humblest in a state of grace—such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; especially the graces of faith, hope, and charity. Especially were they inferior to the last and greatest of these, the grace of charity; the love of God for His own blessed sake, because He is what He is; the love of man in and for God.

This, briefly, is the knowledge which St. Paul was so anxious that the Corinthians should have; first, the sanctity of these endowments as coming, every one of them, from the Holy Ghost; next, the difference in value between these several endowments proportionate to their varying serviceableness to the souls of men; thirdly, the fact that no endowment or gift, however great, added any importance to its possessor, or made him rightfully an object of jealousy, seeing that he only held his gift in trust for the good of others; and lastly, the subordination of all these gifts to the great grace of charity.

The importance of this knowledge, my brethren, to us at the present day, appears to me to be undeniable; for we live at a

time when men seem disposed to ignore the very existence of the Spirit in the world—the presence and action of the holy Comforter upon the souls of men. This is, perhaps, partly the re-action from some mistaken and fanatical ideas about His work which were to be found here and there in a past generation; but it is much more largely due, I apprehend, to the immense place which the material universe occupies in the thoughts, and especially in the imagination, of the present generation. We have explored the realm of matter; we have subjugated it; we have made it at once our friend and our slave, in ways undreamt of by our forefathers. Our telescopes report to us even the geography of distant planets; our practical science utilizes the immense forces of steam and electricity, and brings them under contribution to our daily and most ordinary needs; and we, the men of to-day, occupy, as compared with our ancestors—it is not too much to say it—quite a new position as regards space and time.

We converse hourly with the inhabitants of other continents; we pass from point to point with a rapidity which makes us in fact masters of the world, in quite a new sense from that in which former generations of men were its masters. Hence too, the sources for the creation of capital have been reached and laid open to us as they never were before; and the loan of last week in Paris which astonished all Europe, is but an illustration of what may be the enormous resources of even a single country in the modern world. And all which enhances and sets forth the outward visible, material side of human life has made within the last twenty years unprecedented progress; and yet the wealth of our generation vast as it is, is not the measure of its luxury. In short, this world of matter with all its vastness, with all its undeniable mystery, with all its attractiveness and resource presses around each human soul as it never did before, and makes the realization of an immaterial world, at least for large classes among us, increasingly difficult. It is, I say, not so much a difficulty for the reason as a difficulty for the imagination. As the eye rests upon the streets of this metropolis which year by year become wider and more spacious and magnificent; as it rests upon the gigantic and increasing proportions of the traffic which crowds and crushes around and along these thoroughfares through the weary hours of a long summer day; as it rests upon the immense emporiums and structures of every kind which rise almost month by month in every quarter of the metropolis, we insensibly accustom ourselves, I will not say to the conviction, but at least, to the impression, that this great kingdom of matter which we are so successfully cultivating is indeed, everything—and that there is nothing beyond it but a realm of fancy, for which the pressing demands of our practical every-day life leave us less and less of time and inclination.

Of course when we reflect, we know that the great problems of Life and of the Universe have not really been thus fundamentally changed. We know that man is, amid all his triumphs, only what his forefathers were before him; that he is merely a stranger hurrying across a scene which will soon have closed upon him for ever. What said the wise Teacher of the Old Testament—King Solomon—as we find it in the lesson for yesterday afternoon, describing, indeed, as he does, a different stage and phase of material civilization, but, as regards the whole question, anticipating and summing up the collective experience of the race. "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water; I gat me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Yes, beneath all material splendour, even the greatest, there is at bottom an aching void, because man was made for something higher and nobler than matter—because he cannot find his real satisfaction in matter. He was made for God, and all that reminds him of his real destiny—yes, I will say it, of his true nobility—has a claim upon his ear, and upon his heart that cannot be permanently ignored. When the Apostle cries "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant," he touches a chord to which every man's heart must sooner or later respond, because in his deepest self, man is, and knows himself to be, a spirit. His real self is not affected by the money which he holds in his hand, or by the robe which he wears on his person, or by the servants who surround him that they may do his pleasure, or by the titles by which his fellow creatures approach him, or by the home in which he dwells, or by the position which he fills in the public eye. These things are far from being unimportant; they are, every one of them, gifts from God; and they enter into man's responsibility. Everything, indeed, hereafter may depend upon his way of dealing with any one of them; but they leave his real self unaggran-

dized, because his real self is a something independent of all of them. It is a deeper and more central thing than can be touched by these merely outward surroundings and therefore man, even in this very metropolis of the world's material civilization, cannot permanently forget that higher gifts than any which matter can furnish him with, are really within his grasp, and that he does not well to be ignorant of them.

But there are some who although they know that there is something higher than matter for their true aim and portion, do not always fix their eye upon the really spiritual. They mistake intellect for spirit. They imagine that by great mental accomplishments they are really raising themselves well out of the slough of matter, up into the true sphere of their highest life. They do not distinguish between the contents of a good library, or the proceedings of a literary or scientific association, and the results of the day of Pentecost. But man's reason and thought are but the instruments of his deeper self, of his indestructible personal being. His thought is not himself, any more than are his arms or his legs, and to make "spiritual," mean merely intellectual or mental gifts is to misuse language and to introduce confusion into thought. Certainly, I admit, the word "spiritual" is sometimes used in modern literary English for quick-witted or refined thought; but this debauched use of the word we owe to the French, and our own older usage distinguishes broadly and rightly between the life of the spirit which believes and hopes, and loves, and the life of the intellect which only reasons and thinks. The spiritual gifts are higher far than the merely intellectual gifts. The latter imply nothing as to the moral excellence of the inmost being itself. Voltaire's brilliancy was undeniable, but who would exchange the solid peace of the soul, for the power of making the epigrams which delighted Paris, but which could not bring one hour of true rest or happiness to their gifted author?

Do I say that material or intellectual gifts are worthless? God forbid! They, too, have come from Him. Every good gift whether in nature or by grace, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Life. His gifts to the old heathen world—its astonishing cultivation of reason, of fancy, of language, its vast and varied efforts in the way of constructive enterprise, its burning passion, its abundant genius for art, its vigorous talent for administration and for government were and are still worthy of admiration as coming from Him. Even although these gifts were frequently or rather, almost as a matter of course, misused, debased and sullied by the pervading presence of sin, they were, in themselves, admirable, and we do well to honour and admire them if only because of their Author. And all that He has given in addition (and

what has He not given?) to the modern world outside the kingdom of His Son, and independently of it—our material and intellectual progress in all its departments—is matter not for depreciation, still less for secret fear, but for thankful and generous acknowledgment, if only we remember that there are higher gifts beyond; and that when our architects, our merchants, our engineers, our historians, our poets and our metaphysicians have done their best, there still remains a sublimer sphere from which an Apostle whispers "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."

Doubtless we here touch, as so often in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, upon mystery, that is to say, upon a truth of the reality of which we are convinced, but the full account and reason of which, is in our present state of being and knowledge, beyond us. Like the mystery of Life itself, like the mystery of growth, whether animal or vegetable, in the realm of nature, like the mystery of the Sacraments, our chief means of grace in the Kingdom of Christ, so the daily, hourly action of the Eternal Spirit upon the regenerate Christian soul is a thing certain to us, yet altogether beyond us. Who shall attempt to picture, much less to describe, the process whereby He, the Eternal and Uncreated Spirit overshadows, enwraps, penetrates, moulds, changes and turns our finite and created spirits bathing them, if we will, through and through with His heavenly light and warmth, endowing them with powers which, according to the original forms of their natural structure, are altogether strange to them, fitting them by anticipation here, amid the scenes of sense and time, for a higher and a better world? Who indeed, shall say, for who knows enough of the nature and intrinsic capacities of spirit to attempt the description? We can but recognize the fact as a most real, although invisible miracle, daily, hourly taking place amongst us wherever the Divine Comforter breathes and works in the soul, rendered certain to faith by the unfailing promises of the Divine Christ; rendered certain to experience by the observed changes in those around us in disposition, in character, in spiritual insight, in the whole direction of thought and feeling; changes for which nothing natural will adequately account, and of which none can in reason deny the high significance. From age to age the gifts of the Spirit may vary in their form: substantially they are the same to the very end of time; and, next to the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and the power of His blood to cleanse our sins, there is no fact of equal importance to human beings who are living and have to die.

In conclusion, let us take the words of the Apostle in their broadest sense, and draw from them one or two practical considerations

Now, these words furnish us with a guide to the true idea of Education—with a test and criterion for certain current educational theories. We live in an age when education occupies a greater place in the mind of the country than perhaps ever it did before. It has as we all know been quite recently the subject of imperial legislation, and there can be no doubt that for some time to come it will be amongst the foremost questions of the day. On many accounts we may well rejoice that this is so, and that attention has at length been generally awakened to a sense of the great duty which each passing generation—which our own generation, owes to that which shall succeed it.

But then what do we mean by "Education?" Do we mean merely instruction in what is called with a singular and perverse narrowness of meaning "useful knowledge;" so much knowledge, that is to say, as will be useful to a human being during his passage through this present life and only in relation to it—reading, writing and arithmetic, a little knowledge of history, geography, of the material laws of the universe, of the laws of life and death, knowledge of languages, and the course of human thought, or rather of human guesses at the secret and meaning of human destiny. Is there, then, *nothing* beyond? Is man really destined for a hereafter, and is there a body of knowledge within our reach which bears closely upon that hereafter? Is it not a matter of common sense to make this knowledge, too, a part of the instruction which we administer to our children for their highest good? Is a child, after all, only a mind, which, like a carpet bag, is to be crammed with as many facts huddled together as it can possibly hold? Is not a child rather a living soul, a character to be trained, to be developed, to be exercised, to be strengthened, to be chastened, to be encouraged; and is not some assistance from above, some special gifts, some sacraments, some graces, and some sources of life and of strength needful as a matter of fact for this great work? Ah! when I hear of "schemes of education," which are only schemes for packing the mind full of facts, and which include amongst those facts almost everything *except* what bears upon that one subject which it is most important for human beings to know, a voice from above sounds in my ears "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren of this generation, I would not have you ignorant."

Brethren, what will it profit? Even a heathen poet asked the question, What will it profit to have measured and weighed out the whole realm of matter—to have explored and studied all the achievements of human thought, if after all, God's gift to the soul—His gifts of a new birth, of a real redemption, of a new insight into truth, of a robe wherein one day the soul may appear even before Him in His sanctity and in His justice

without trembling and without confusion—if these are altogether ignored ?

So, too, in this sentence of the Apostle I see a rule for forming friendships. The importance of friendship as exercising a decisive influence upon a man's character and life was, perhaps, as well understood in the ancient world, to say the least, as now. The ancients made friendships and kept them up in a more formal and regulated way than we do; and, like Cicero and others, they wrote elaborate treatises upon the subject, and reduced it as far as they could, to a matter of method and rule. Perhaps before the idea of a universal brotherhood in Christ had dawned upon the conscience of the world, a single sincere attachment between two human beings, had a significance which we to-day can with difficulty appreciate. But, at any rate, the ancients were right in estimating very highly the moral importance of friendship; for a friend—and there is scarcely a truth which a young man ought more carefully to lay to heart—a friend at once reflects and moulds character. His influence penetrates in a thousand ways into the recesses of thought and feeling. He leaves his mark there, most assuredly. He is always either a help or a hindrance, a blessing or a curse, as the case may be. In choosing a friend, therefore, or to speak more truly with a view to what is generally the fact, in allowing oneself to glide into a friendship, it is most important to ask ourselves what it is precisely that attracts us in the proposed friend? Is it his income? His great possessions? Or his splendid home? These are not the man who is to be our friend; they are but the accidents of his life, they are not its essence. Is it his fertile imagination, his vigorous reason and sparkling wit? These, alas! are compatible—and who does not know it?—with the worst degradation of the man himself. What is his real character? What are the qualities of his heart? What, properly speaking, are his spiritual endowments? What is his amount of faith in the Unseen? Of his hope in an eternal future, and his hope in the eternal love of God to man? These are the questions which should be answered concerning these spiritual gifts. In a matter of such vital importance do not let us willingly be ignorant.

And, lastly, here is a rule for all steady and systematic efforts at self-improvement. It is common but it is perilous, to get older without getting better; and improvement in outward circumstances, improvement in mental accomplishments, are not here, and now in question. Of the first it is written, "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him." Of the second "We know in part, and we prophecy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Improvement in

spiritual endowments is the real point, if not in the present counterparts of those public gifts of illumination and utterance, of works of power, and works of mercy which St. Paul had in his eye when addressing the Church at Corinth, and especially in those personal and higher graces which the Apostle estimates so highly, and which as they are offered to all Christians by the Divine Spirit, so all Christians should know how to possess them,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These gifts of the Spirit do not pass away, they become incorporated with the Christian's life and character. They give it force and beauty here, and we do not take leave of them as we take leave of all else, when we reach the Gate of Death. We carry them with us into the Eternal Presence chamber.

Let us therefore, make the most of the means of grace, as they are termed, while we may. Of the certificated channels through which these gifts must reach us—of prayer, first of all, of the Divine Scriptures and the Holy Sacraments. Life is too short, my brethren, to allow any man to know, or to do, everything. There is much of which we may safely and even profitably be ignorant in this world; but as immortal beings we dare not ignore, we dare not neglect, the gifts which the Eternal Spirit bestows upon us here, that hereafter they may robe us in a happy immortality.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 11, 1872.

"*So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*"—1 Kings xix, 19-21.

Here, my brethren, we see one of the methods by which the prophetical ministry was propagated and maintained in Israel. It was not, you may have remarked, like the Jewish priesthood a matter of hereditary descent. The son did not become a prophet because his father had been a prophet before him. Like Jeremiah each prophet was the subject of a special predestination to his work. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." But each prophet was called to his work by some especial token or

influence, and then, either as a student in one of the colleges or schools of the prophets, as they were called, or as an attendant upon a great teacher, he received a kind of education for his future life.

Elisha appears to have been a man of substance. He was ploughing in the field with twelve yoke of oxen, at Abel-meholah in the valley of the Jordan, when Elijah passed on his way back from the great vision which he had received in Horeb. Elijah does not seem to have spoken; he merely cast his mantle on Elisha, and then passed on. This act, indeed, was symbolical. It had, like many of the former acts of the prophets, such as rending the dress, or putting ashes on the head, an ascertained and recognized meaning. The prophet's mantle was a visible sign of the robe of spiritual power which encompassed him, and to cast the mantle on another was to call him to share the labour, the glory the difficulty, the responsibility, the danger of the prophetic office. Although Elijah had not spoken, this significant action was perfectly understood. Elisha obeyed its purpose, and he ran after the silent prophet who was already vanishing from his sight. He had one, only one condition, he would just take leave of his parents and receive their blessing, and then he would follow the prophet. Elijah assents. But Elisha must return soon considering the greatness of the destiny before him. The original would be here better rendered "Go, return, for how great a thing have I done unto thee!" Elisha is bent upon showing the undivided allegiance which he owes to the prophet—the completeness of his self-surrender. Up to that moment his farm on the banks of the Jordan had been his all, as in a later age their boats and nets had been everything to those fishermen on the sea of Galilee who were also predestined to the apostolate of the world. Elisha does not linger to drop regrets over a cherished past, from which he is parting for ever; he forthwith slays the oxen with which he had just been ploughing, and he takes even the plough tackling for fuel, by which he may burn their flesh, and he gives one parting entertainment to his acquaintances in the neighbourhood, that they may have no doubt either about his goodwill towards themselves, or of his fixed determination and lofty resolution, and then he leaves the scene of his labours, he leaves his fields, his home, his all, to become the servant of Elijah. Is this, think you, to be looked upon as only and strictly an incident in the life of an ancient prophet. Has it no permanent, no higher application? Has it no human significance?

There is some risk, my brethren, of blinding ourselves to the real meaning of the Old Testament, of its urgent and striking appeals to the human conscience, to the Christian life, by saying of this and that thing, it is only Oriental and has, therefore

no relevancy for a modern European. Certainly, there is a superficial element of custom and of ceremony in the life described in the Old Testament, which does belong to the ancient East and which is untransferable to the circumstances of our own day and country. But human nature on the one side, and the great laws of God's providential dealings on the other, were in the East two thousand eight hundred years ago, exactly what they are now, and what occurred then, was, as an Apostle says, "written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the ancient Scriptures might have hope"—hope as well as other virtues which are to be won from their perusal.

The call of Elisha has its place not merely in the history of his order, not merely in the history of his country, but in the history of humanity, and as such it must be regarded as an astonishing instance of the power of religious influence. The silent prophet passes; he drops his mantle, and the life of another fellow man is agitated to its centre, to its inmost depths; its whole current and direction is from that moment changed; he yields to an attraction; he does not analyze it, he obeys. And it may be well to ask ourselves in what—putting aside for to-day, but by no means ignoring it, the great question of God's supernatural grace—in what did this influence, viewed on its human side, in what did this attraction consist? For it is not to be supposed that the obedience of Elisha had nothing to do with those motives and laws of conduct which govern the actions of thoughtful and conscientious men now. It is not to be supposed that Elijah put forth some force which was literally magical—magical in such a sense, that it exerted upon Elisha's will an influence for which no account could be given in reason, a magnetic influence which *could not* but be obeyed. Had, indeed, this been the case, the interest of this history would have been shifted from the department of spiritual and moral life to the department of physical life and it would be perhaps more properly investigated in some lecture-room at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, than from the pulpit of this Cathedral. No! mighty as was the influence of Elijah, Elisha's liberty was not restrained, still less destroyed by it. He was perfectly free to have resisted it. If he did not do so, if he yielded at once, if he decided instantaneously on an obedience which, as we may for the moment think, ought to have been preceded and justified by an exhaustive discussion, this was because there must have been a preparatory educational process going on for some time within him. He must have had his thoughts, affections, aspirations which only waited the occasion to be combined, to be expressed in action; and so when the great prophet passed by him all the scattered reasons for being drawn towards him coalesced into a single ray of moral light and moral warmth, and

determined his future disciple's course,—impelled him to an act of such unreserved obedience.

It is, then, material to ask what must have been at least some of the motives which led Elisha thus to obey.

And, first, Elijah would have represented in Elisha's eyes a great cause, a great or imperious idea, or truth, which had lain for centuries in the soul of every Israelite; that idea was the existence, the manifestation of the one living and true God who had revealed Himself to Israel. For while the surrounding nations were in different degrees of heathen darkness and degradation, Israel by a singular exercise of God's favour, had been, indeed, chosen to know His will, and in that knowledge to know much—though by no means with all the fulness which we Christians now have the means of knowing Him—of His character, of His nature, of His attributes. To treasure that knowledge, to hand it on from generation to generation, to make it the inspiring principle of national as well as of individual thought and life,—this was the appointed task of the sacred people, again and again prescribed in their law, again and again enforced by the exhortations of their prophets, again and again illustrated by the lives and by the works of their most representative saints and leaders. In quiet times not merely every prophet, every member of the priesthood, and of the Levitical tribe, but even every Israelite in some sense represented this great truth, for every Israelite was admitted by circumcision into a covenant with God, which bound him to loyalty to God's revelation of Himself, just as every baptized Christian in this Cathedral bears the sacred sign, as our baptismal service expresses it, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ Crucified, but manfully fight under His banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue like a loyal and faithful soldier to serve Him to his life's end." In quiet times this representative duty of every believer in a revelation, towards the revelation which he believes, is accepted, at least in terms, without difficulty. It is only, as our Lord said, "when persecution or tribulation arises, because of the world," that certain classes of character are, as a matter of course, offended.

When Elijah appeared upon the scene of history it seemed as if the revelations committed to Israel, were on the point of being trodden out by a young and vigorous idolatry. The marriage of Ahab, the king of Israel, with Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Sidon, had led to the propagation of the Queen's religion, the worship of the Phœnician Baal, one of those seductive varieties of worship of the vital forms of nature in a personified shape which exercised so extraordinary a sway over the imagination and reason of the ancient world; and which, although in modern times they have adopted a more

refined guise, are by no means strange or unwelcome to the modern world. So seductive was that superstition, and so commanding the influence of the court, so vigorous, so trenchant the policy of the Queen that seven thousand was the total number of Israelites who had escaped the taint,—who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. And at great trial times like these, great causes become almost necessarily identified with the names of individuals. Truths are, for a time impersonated in a single man. And Elijah was to the revelation of the one God, Maker of heaven and earth, what at a later age St. Paul was to the truth of man's justification, through Christ's merits without legal obedience—at least in certain portions of the Church—what St. Athanasius was, during the great Arian struggle to the true Godhead of Jesus Christ, as it had been taught by the Apostles.

As men looked on Elijah moving rapidly from one scene of danger to another, in those troublous times, the whole history of the earlier, the old Mosaic revelation seemed to live again, seemed to speak in him; behind his individual voice and gesture there was the felt presence of a great and living cause,—of a mighty and eternal Truth; and as a consequence he exercised an influence greatly out of proportion to his personal position. It was not the man himself, it was the Divine cause, it was the heaven-sent revelation which he represented, which won, which enchained to him the hearts of those who still believed in it. Elisha bent before the truth of which his master was himself the servant.

My brethren, the first condition of a deep religious influence, proceeding whether from individuals or from Churches, is a clear, positive creed—clear and positive whether it be large or small. A man must know, at least, what he does believe. Elijah would have been altogether powerless, had he only insisted on the falsehoods and superstitions of Jezebel and her prophets. He would have been powerless had he merely surrounded the revelation of Sinai with a garniture of the finest sentiment and poetry, leaving it doubtful whether he himself believed it to be God's truth or not. He was powerful because men knew that he had no sort of doubt about his creed, about its exact frontier, about its absolute certainty; and Elisha felt the passage, not of a mere man, but of a mighty cause or truth represented in the man, and he obeyed it.

But then secondly, in representing a great cause, a mere official representation is not enough. For religious influence personal qualities are wanted,—qualities in harmony with the requirements of the cause, or truth represented. Eli and his sons represented the Mosaic revelation to Israel in their day, but they only made the Lord's people to transgress. Alexander

the Sixth, and Leo the Tenth, represented Christianity in an official sense of the term to Western Christendom, but they certainly did not recommend it to the consciences of men. The ordinary Hanoverian Bishops, of a century ago, were by their office representatives of Christianity in the Church of England, but, with a few splendid exceptions, their representation, too, was strictly heartless, official, and powerless where it was not, as in Hoadley's case, utterly repulsive. In order to reach human hearts and mould the affections, some sort of personal conformity to the ideal represented is needed, as well as the official right to represent. And Elijah would have been felt by Elisha to have this personal title to represent this cause of God superadded to the official one. Every Israelite we may be assured, whether friend or foe, whether in open league with the apostate court of Jezebel, or in secret correspondence with the scattered schools of the prophets, every Israelite had heard of the stern mien and lofty proportions of a character which seemed to its contemplators to belong to another world. They knew that if anywhere, here was a perfect simplicity of purpose; here was a determination to live and to die for the sake of the God of the Patriarchs who had brought Israel out of Egypt, who had spoken from Sinai. They knew that here was an unflinching courage which shrank not from encounter with the cruel, the wily idolatress who ruled the policy of Israel. They must have been well aware that the ties of flesh and blood did not fetter the great prophet's liberty; for like John the Baptist, nine centuries later, he had prepared for his ministry in the solitude of the desert; and he then had suddenly appeared in the very palace of the weak and apostate monarch, to denounce his sin, and foretell the judgment which awaited him. In an age of decaying faith, in an age of progressive moral deterioration, in an age of general apostasy, Elijah stood forth from among the mass of men in almost solitary grandeur. He must have been felt to be the typical saint and hero of the old Theocracy; he must have been recognized as embodying in the highest degree the moral power which belonged to a life so shaped and so led as to express before men's eyes his strong and firm conviction of the Sinaitic revelation. True it was, as we have heard in this afternoon's lesson, that Elijah too was at times subject even to the deepest sense of discouragement. When, after his great victory over the assembled prophets of Baal upon Carmel, it seemed for a moment as if the tide of public feeling in Israel had really turned—men cried in their enthusiasm, "The Lord, He is the God! the Lord, He is the God"—but the triumphant change was but of short duration. The day of Carmel was soon forgotten; Ahab was still Ahab, and Jezebel had not ceased to be Jezebel; and the multitude, which, for a

moment, had obeyed with fervour the authority of the prophet, soon fell back into the practice of the ensnaring and voluptuous rites of the Phœnician God with a new enthusiasm.

And then Elijah felt that despondency of which great and ardent souls alone are capable. God seemed to be hiding His face; the prophet's faith was almost slipping from him, the whole order of the moral world was, in his eyes, for the moment confused, dark, incomprehensible, out of course. Jezebell was again in power. She was menacing his life, and he, in truth, is weary of his life,—weary of the apparently hopeless struggle in which he is engaged, and he returns to the southern desert in which he had learned his earliest lessons, where he is well out of the way of the levity of the frivolity of his apostate countrymen; where he is face to face with the savage desolation of nature in a scene that seems to correspond to the blank of his own inward misery. He longed to die, and when a voice from above reaches his conscience in his retreat—"What doest thou here Elijah?" he can only reply by a bitter complaint that God has abandoned His cause, that He has left His prophet to struggle undefended, alone, vanquished. Does this forfeit the prophet's influence? Is it fatal to the commanding, to the unique greatness of his character? Certainly, we must admit it would have been a more perfect course to have trusted God throughout—to have trusted Him in failure, not less than amid success; but Elijah, great as he was, was not the all perfect; and his failure was itself one of those forms of failure which are only possible to faith and devotion. They to whom life seems worthless because God's cause, not theirs, but God's, is imperilled or defeated for the time, are, in all generations among the few. To the many, the whole question is of no great concern. Whether the Church of Christ is winning her way among human souls, or losing it; whether she is extending the frontiers of the Redeemer's kingdom, or barely maintaining them; whether her ministers are speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, or are pandering weakly to the popular unbelief—all this troubles them not. They eat, they drink, they walk, they sleep as if all were well, just as did their fathers in the olden days before them. The anguish, the discontent, the fierce desperation of Elijah are the products—it may be they are the unregulated and diseased products—but they are the products of a noble passion, whereof the many know nothing; it is the noble, the generous passion which is careful only for the honour of God,—which is uncontrollable when He seems to be defeated or dishonoured. No! If Elisha did know of Elijah's retreat in profound discouragement, almost in despair, to the rocks of Horeb, he would not have been—I dare say it—less open to

the great prophet's influence. The poignant despondency of a great faith is almost its virtue. Elisha would have felt not the less drawn to the solitary at Horeb than to the conqueror at Carmel.

There is a third element of influence yet, beyond;—the influence which belongs to a soul often in communion with God. This is less easy to seize, to describe or to measure, than the weight which belongs either to the representation of a great cause, or truth, or to personal elevation of character. This cannot be mapped out in words or in actions. It is nothing exactly tangible; it is an atmosphere which hovers around a life and which we are conscious of breathing but that is all. When we approach it, it is not a matter of manner or gesture, of expressive words and studied silence. It is not to be resolved into any outward form; it is too volatile, if you like, it is too strictly super-sensuous—it is too altogether appertaining to the region of spirit, to be registered by any definite tests and marks in the sphere of matter. Yet who has not sometimes felt this indescribable influence, this sure certificate of nearness to God, which the few privileged souls of both sexes in all stations of society, unconsciously to themselves, but most surely exert? It is something beyond character: it is tone. It is a something beyond goodness: it is holiness. It needs no language to express it: it is felt instinctively. Elisha may well have felt it—as we read the narrative we know it—as Elijah passed along the field of Abel-meholah.

And this history suggests two sets of considerations—one for those who exert religious influence, the other for those who yield to it.

And first for those who exert it. All wise and thoughtful people may well shrink, my brethren, from the great but unavoidable responsibility of doing so; the responsibility of saying, whether in words or by acts, to others—it little matters —"Follow me! Follow me upwards through this path in the light of this or that creed, towards the Throne of Light." Many men profess altogether to decline any such responsibility, and yet it is certain, that do what we will, we cannot, any one of us, but exert some religious influence. Every man is assuredly the Apostle of something, of evil if not of good. Our very presence is of itself the propagation of some faith. Whether we will or not, we are leading men: we are leading those around us in some direction.

"We scatter seeds with careless hand,
And dream we ne'er shall see them more;
But, for a thousand years
Their fruit appears
In weeds that mar the land,
Or healthful store.

The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past,
But they shall last
In the dread Judgment Day;
And we shall meet."

It is better, then, to make a virtue of what is already a necessity,—to wield and exert usefully, a talent of which we cannot dispossess ourselves altogether, if we would. Some of us are teachers: what is the influence we are exerting on our pupils? Many of us are masters or mistresses: what is the influence we are bringing to bear upon our servants? Others are parents. How are you influencing—in some important way you must be influencing—the future of your children? Ah! but you say—"we wish we could be of use in this way, but then it is an affair of temperament; some people seem to understand it, others do not; and we are among the number." No, brethren, the explanation is simpler, it is more just than this. If when Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha—the mantle of his creed, of his conduct, of his life,—Elisha does not respond, there may be another explanation of the failure than that which you are thinking of. Success is impossible, if Elijah represents nothing clear and certain. If he does not know his own mind, if he is only trying to win converts to a few private guesses or crochets of his own, instead of for a creed which has come from heaven. Success is improbable, again, if Elijah's life is quite out of keeping with his creed, if he is felt to be incapable of that which he recommends, if he has done and ventured nothing for the cause he advocates. It is improbable, too, if he has nothing about him of the air and bearing of an envoy of God, if he is obviously devoted to this world, and only alludes to the next in an official or formal way, and without the accent of a man to whom it is a serious reality. Doubtless God may make His truth do its own work, through His grace in human hearts, in spite of the inconsistencies of its representatives. But then I am speaking of what is probable, and, as a rule, God works through instruments. As a rule Elisha is won by the decision, by the consistency of the unworldliness of Elijah as much as by the apparent intrinsic claims of that which he represents.

And, lastly, there is instruction here for those who yield to religious influence. Some of us, I suppose, at least have known in life something like the passage of an Elijah in our past lives. A religious influence has swept across our path, placing truth, placing duty more clearly before us than we ever knew them before, recommending them by an example of high-minded devotion,—of simple, of disinterested life. We have felt its power; have we obeyed it?—It may be after a legitimate, a wise

hesitation such as was Elisha's, but still, have we obeyed it? Had Elisha refused to acknowledge what was meant by the casting of Elijah's mantle, who can know how vast would have been the difference to the kingdom of Israel, to the kingdom of Judah, to the kingdom of Syria, to the kingdom of God in each, and to himself above all. He was no longer in the same moral position after the Divine call had reached him; he could no longer survey, if he would, his twelve yoke of oxen with a perfectly easy conscience as if he had really no duty, no destiny, excepting that of ploughing the field in Abel-meholah. A spell from heaven had crossed his path, and he must decide, either deliberately to acknowledge, or deliberately to ignore it. So it may be, or has been with us The history of this afternoon's lesson will have recalled to those of us who know our Bible, at least two passages in the life of our blessed Redeemer—the call of the disciples, and the call of the man who wished first to bury his father. In our Lord's case it is observable that the call to instant obedience is much more peremptory than in Elijah's. He commands in terms: "Follow me." Elijah only suggests by a symbolical action. Our Lord will allow of no delay even to perform the last duties to a parent's memory. Elijah has no hesitation in allowing Elisha to take leave of his father and mother before entering on the prophetic life. The difference is to be explained by the intrinsic difference between the person of the prophet and the person of the Redeemer. Elijah did but represent the cause of God. In Jesus, as His Apostle said, there dwelt "the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily." Elijah's conduct although that of a saint and hero, was not absolutely perfect. In the life of Jesus, no trace of shortcoming could possibly be detected by the most cynical criticism. They who came near to Elijah came near to one who was irradiated by constant communion with God; they who came near to Jesus, were as the seraphim and cherubim round the throne, whether they knew it or not, close to the very form which the All Holy had assumed on earth. The greater urgency of our Lord is proportioned to His unspeakably higher and more imperative claim. And it is with Him—and not with His prophets, not with any of His instruments or agents—that we have to do. Amid our most trivial duties in this life, on days which are passing by us in the usual round of uneventful routine, He may speak to us as never before. A quiet word may be dropped by a friend—a sentence read in a book—a thought lodged we know not why, or how, in the mind, and we are laid under obligations to a new and more imperious view of life and duty. Not Elijah, but Elijah's Lord has passed and cast His mantle on us.

There is of course, abundant room for self-delusion of many

kinds in the supposed visit of a heavenly call. We may read our fancies in the skies. If we do not take care we may transfigure our own *wishes* into a Divine voice by a process so subtle as to impose upon ourselves. But we are tolerably safe if two conditions are observed. If, first, the duty or line of life prescribed is unwelcome to our natural inclinations; and if, secondly, it does not contradict what we know God has taught us hitherto—if it is an extension of His earlier teaching, not its condemnation. No one who believes that our Lord Jesus Christ is present by His spirit in His church can doubt that He will, from time to time, speak thus to souls in virtue of His own promises. No one who knows anything practically of the lives of earnest Christians will question the fact of His having done so. And to listen for the footsteps of the Divine Redeemer passing by us in the ordinary conditions of life is a most important part of the probation of every man. How much may depend on following when He beckons us to some higher duty, to some more perfect service, we shall only know when we see all things as they really are, in the light of His Eternity.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 18, 1872.

"*Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.*"—1 Kings xxii, 6-8.

Last Sunday, my brethren, we were face to face with Elijah and more remotely with Ahab, king of Israel, while each was still in the midst of his career; the king obeying the behests of his idolatrous wife, and persecuting the servants of God;—the prophet encountering the Idol system in all its strength.

vanquishing it, seeing the fruits of his victory fade away before his very eyes, retiring in deep despondency into the desert, and yet pledging himself to the future by the call of his great successor, Elisha. But all human careers, even those which seem the greatest, are quickly spent; and to-day, in both cases, we have reached the close. In the first Lesson of this afternoon you have listened to the account of the great prophet's triumphant ascent by a whirlwind into heaven. In this morning's Lesson, the weak and wicked monarch has encountered his predestined doom; and it is to the circumstances which immediately preceded the tragedy at Ramoth-gilead, that I invite your attention.

Now, in order to thoroughly understand the historical setting of this conversation between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, which is given in the text, it is necessary to recall events that had occurred three years before this fatal expedition to take Ramoth-gilead. The power of Ben-hadad, king of Syria—at that period in the history of the kingdom of Israel, by far its most formidable enemy, for as yet Assyria, and still more Babylon, had not appeared upon the Mediterranean—the power of Ben-hadad had been broken by a double, and, in the last case, by a decisive defeat. At the head of an army commanded by thirty-two vassal kings, Ben-hadad had insolently demanded the surrender of Ahab's wealth, and possessions, even of his wives and children; and when this demand was pressed a second time in more peremptory terms, Ahab, in his weakness, resisted. Ben-hadad threatened that he would reduce the city of Samaria to ashes by so numerous an army that its very rubbish should scarcely suffice for each one of his soldiers to fill his hand; and to prove his contempt for the power of the Israelites, he gave orders for the attack to be made upon the city, whilst he himself was engaged in a mid-day carousal in his pavilion with his subject kings and his leading officers. The whole body of fighting Israelites was but seven thousand men,—the exact number observe, of those who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But the victory over Ben-hadad — and to this the sacred writer calls special attention—was really won by only two hundred and thirty-two servants of the provincial governors, men comparatively unarmed and without military training, who had come to seek shelter and safety in those troublous times within the walls of Samaria. Ben-hadad fled on horseback, while the king of Israel at the head of his troops, completely defeated the besieging army. But hoping to retrieve his fortunes, and to recover his lost ascendancy, Ben-hadad entered on a fresh campaign with the new year. His advisers had assured him that the God of Israel was only "a hill God," whose

power did not really extend to the plains, and that, therefore, a new campaign in the valley of Esdraelon might have a very different result to the last. They also recommended Ben-hadad to raise his army to its former numbers, and to remove the vassal kings and his chief officers, who were suspected of not having done their duty, from their positions of command. After taking these measures, Ben-hadad advanced to the siege of Aphek, in the vale of Esdraelon. The army of Israel, says the sacred writer, looked like two miserable flocks of goats, in contrast to the Syrian host which filled the land with its vast levies; and yet a second time, Ahab was victorious. One hundred thousand fighting men fell in one day, twenty-seven thousand were destroyed by the fall of the walls of Aphek, and Ben-hadad, now a captive and trembling for his life, faithfully and thankfully promised, if his life only might be spared, to allow the Israelites a quarter for their bazaars in the streets of Damascus, and to restore all the cities which had been won from Israel in the campaigns against Ahab's father, Omri. Upon the faith of these terms Ben-hadad was released, and a peace of three years followed.

Now, it was in reference to this treaty, at the expiration of the three years, that Ahab proposed to Jehoshaphat their making a joint expedition with a view of taking the city of Ramoth-gilead, which ought to have been surrendered with the rest, but which had been persistently held by the Syrians, notwithstanding the promise of Ben-hadad. Ahab had married his daughter to Jehoshaphat's son, and Jehoshaphat was on a visit at the Court of Samaria, so that everything was favourable—putting religious interests out of the question—for the two kings to co-operate against Ramoth-gilead. Certainly, too, Ahab appeared to have natural justice on his side in his wish to recover Ramoth-gilead; Ben-hadad having promised to surrender it, and by that promise having saved his life. Jehoshaphat had, at first, no hesitation in placing the whole force of the kingdom of Judah at the king of Israel's disposal for such an object. "I am," he said, "as thou art; my people as thy people; my horses as thy horses."

As against Ben-hadad, then, Ahab was in the right when he sought to recover Ramoth-gilead. But, there was another with whom he had to reckon, he had to reckon with God. Face to face with God, Ahab's real position was, at this period of his life, that of a condemned criminal; and he, therefore, was not in a moral position to represent and to act on behalf of the rights of Israel. Not to speak of the misery which he had brought upon his country by his encouragement of the Phœnician idolatry, he had placed himself under a ban by sparing, from a purely selfish

motive, the life of Ben-hadad, which, like that of Agag, the Amalekite in an earlier age, could not be spared without injury to the Theocracy. As he returned from his great victory, he met the prophet of the Lord, who, after attracting his attention by a symbolical action characteristic of the time, had announced his sentence:—"Thus saith the Lord, because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people." Then came, not long after, the more serious matter of Naboth's vineyard, in which, at the instigation, and with the assistance of his wicked wife, Ahab had committed a judicial murder of singular atrocity, in order that he might improve his property. Then for the last time, in the garden of the murdered man, Elijah had met Ahab,—had foretold the extinction of his house, and the circumstances of his end. It was in the character of a herald of the Divine justice,—placed, like Jeremiah whom the Lord set over the nations and over the kingdoms, "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, as well as to build and to plant,"—that Elijah thus passed sentence of death upon the king of Israel. Ahab's blood was to be licked up by the hungry dogs in the public square, where they had just licked up the blood of Naboth. Ahab's subsequent sorrow, led, indeed, to a modification of his sentence; his house was not to be extinguished absolutely with himself; but on himself, at the time of which we are speaking, the sentence of God's wrath, uttered by His prophet lay in all its awful power.

These dreadful predictions must, from time to time, have rung, we should think, in the ears of Ahab. They would have been a matter of common conversation in Judah and Benjamin, not less than in Israel. They must have been also familiar to Jehoshaphat. For a while, indeed, Ahab's life passed quietly in the midst of a numerous family, and surrounded by a brilliant court. Strengthened, moreover, in the good opinion of his subjects by his recent military successes, and by his alliance with the powerful and enterprising king of Judah, Ahab would, no doubt, have succeeded in escaping, at least, to a great extent, from his legitimate fears. But if, when after the lapse of time, Ahab proposed the joint expedition to Ramoth-gilead, his own faith in the words of the prophet did not suggest some reason for hesitation, Jehoshaphat, at least, was too prudent not to insist upon enquiry, at the hands of some accredited organ of the Mind of God, into the wisdom of the expedition. Jehoshaphat, it is true, had consented to co-operate with Ahab, but before he set out he wished to know what God was thinking, what God was willing, about the proposed course, if he possibly could.

Let us pause, my brethren, for a moment, if only to note here a great duty in all men who really believe in God's providential care and love—the duty of ascertaining, so far as we can, what He would wish, what He would approve and disapprove, before we undertake any considerable work, or enter upon any new course in life. For it is certain that whatever we undertake in things great or small, in things spiritual, or temporal, He is watching us; He is passing judgment of some sort upon us; and He will one day call us to account for our actions. It is, at least, practical for us to think of this now. We may not, indeed, have prophets at hand who see visions in the heavens, unveiling as did the vision of Micaiah the inmost machinery of the Divine Government. God deals with His people in one way at one period, — in another at a later one. But, by way of compensation, we do know more of the principles of His government than did the Israelites in the days of Ahab. We know more of His power, much more of His love, and more of His will, as they bear upon the details of human life. We can, therefore, in the great majority of cases decide for ourselves the question of going up to Ramoth-gilead. We can always, and should always apply to God in prayer for enlightenment and guidance by His Holy Spirit within the soul through the course of events without it. Our prayer should be "Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me, for Thou art the God of my salvation." For, most assuredly, God will take His own way of teaching us His Will, and not seldom, now as of old, is that Will best learnt from some friend whose moral and religious character, whose balanced judgment, whose ready sympathies, we can really trust; who will look at our case in a spirit of perfect goodwill, and yet with the high impartiality of perfect independence. Everything depends in a case of this kind, on this question,—Who is to be consulted? The gravest issues, as in Ahab's case, may hang upon the answer to that question. Ahab actually applied to four hundred prophets who were likely, he thought, by their numbers and position, to satisfy the scruples of Jehoshaphat, and to fortify the resolution at which he had himself arrived. But who were those prophets? Prophets of whom? The question has been eagerly debated among Biblical scholars. The opinion that they were the prophets of the Phœnician deities, Ashraal or Baal,—prophets who had not appeared upon Carmel and who had, therefore, escaped the doom of their colleagues,—is inconsistent with the statement that Ahab was seeking to know the word of Jehovah at their hands. On the other hand, it is plain from Jehoshaphat's second demand that they were not legitimate prophets of the Lord, in the sense in which Elijah and

the pupils of the prophetical schools were. They would, therefore, seem to have been prophets of Jehovah, whom they worshipped, illegally under the symbol of a calf; an order of men who had arisen in the reign of Jeroboam, and who practised prophecying as a profession, without any positive call from God, and who, at the present time, when the Phœnician idolatry had fallen into something like discredit, were in the pay, or at least under the influence, of the court of Samaria.

It must have been an extraordinary sight which was witnessed outside the principal gate of Samaria on that eventful day. Upon a platform erected a little in advance of the gate, were raised two thrones, upon which in full regal splendour, sat the now intimately allied monarchs of Judah and of Israel, while the four hundred prophets, one after another, prophesied before them. In the dress, and with much of the manner of modern Eastern Dervishes, one after another, each took up his parable, but the refrain of each was ever the same—"Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." One prophet there was, indeed, more intrepid and enterprising than the rest, Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, who particularly distinguished himself among the four hundred. He practically illustrated his prophecy by a dramatic or symbolic action to render it more impressive. He made horns of iron, that is to say spikes, in allusion to the figure employed by Moses in the vision of Joseph, which was intended to convey to the tribe of Ephraim a promise of perpetual favour; and then advancing from among the rest, towards the foot of the throne, he brandished his iron horns and cried to Ahab "With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast destroyed them."

The demonstration, as a whole, was all that Ahab wanted. It was of value as a means of moulding public opinion in favour of the proposed expedition; and though he did not attach much weight to such things, it was in its way, satisfactory to him. But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. Indeed Ahab and Jehoshaphat were not really aiming at the same thing. Ahab merely wanted the sanction of Religion, if he could possibly get it, upon a project as to which he had already made up his mind. Jehoshaphat really wished, if he could, to know what God's Will was about Ahab's project. Jehoshaphat surveyed the four hundred prophets, their numbers, their picturesqueness, their peculiar position and influence; he listened to their loud, reiterated cry—"Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper"—reiterated, as if victory could be already assured by all this exuberance of official enthusiasm. But he was not content, and he turned to ask Ahab whether there was not "a prophet of the Lord besides, that he might enquire of him?" Ahab was annoyed at the question:

although on the part of Jehoshaphat it was strictly legitimate and inevitable. Jehoshaphat naturally could not trust the prophets of Jeroboam's schism—the prophets of the calves. Ahab sullenly replied "There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah," but added that he hated Micaiah because of his never prophesying good of him, but evil. Still, a chamberlain was sent to fetch Micaiah, and on the way back this courtier expressed a hope that Micaiah would feel himself at liberty to prophesy in the same sense and terms as the four hundred had done. To this Micaiah replied that his message was not a plaything which he could mould at will, — that he was instructed from heaven, and that he must speak according to the terms of his instructions—"What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." On reaching the Royal presence Micaiah was asked, as had been the others, the formal question: "Shall we go up against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" And he answered, at first in the very words of the four hundred—"Go up, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." There must have been something in the prophet's tone which betrayed his real mind to the heart of Ahab—something which suggested that this was not the real judgment of the prophet, but only an ironical echo of the language of the courtiers, who were guided in their pretended inspiration by purely selfish and personal considerations. Ahab's suspicions were aroused, and angry and frightened, he adjured Micaiah to speak only the truth in the name of Jehovah; and then it was that Micaiah told how he had seen in visions Israel scattered upon the mountains of Gilead, "as sheep without a shepherd," and how he had heard the voice of the true King of the nations sounding from the heavens—"These have no master: let them return every one to his home in peace"—implying that Ahab would have fallen in the contemplated attack upon Ramoth-gilead. And when Ahab attributed his prophecy to Micaiah's personal hostility to himself Micaiah replied, by showing how the Lord had determined that Ahab, being led astray by the predictions of teachers who were inspired by the spirit of falsehood, would be lured on to the war in which he would meet his doom.

This second vision has a bearing upon a great question—upon the permission and control of Evil by a good God—which is of the utmost importance. It is not within our present purpose to consider it. We can only just glance at what followed—at the indignation of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, at Micaiah's depreciatory account of the origin of his inspirations—at the altercation which ensued between him and Micaiah—at the king's sentence upon the intrepid prophet, upon whose life and

history, as the prison doors of the house of the governor of Samaria close upon him, the Bible record throws no further light.

Now, here let us carefully note the fact that Ahab's tragical fate was the immediate consequence of preferring his own will, backed up by the advice of the four hundred, to the revelations of Micaiah. Why Jehoshaphat, after Micaiah's prophecy, still consented to join in the expedition we do not certainly know. It was, probably an additional illustration of that element of weakness in his character which had led him to consent originally to a marriage alliance with the house of Ahab. But Ahab, although he took his own way, was haunted by a suspicion that the imprisoned and injured Micaiah might, after all, be right. Accordingly he entered the battle in disguise that he might not attract the notice of the Syrian archers; and Jehoshaphat, who was the only soldier with royal decorations on his person, being mistaken for the king of Israel was in consequence exposed to a charge of unusual violence, from which he was with difficulty rescued by his body-guard. But Ahab's precautions were all in vain. No human contrivance can avert the execution of the Divine decrees. A Syrian archer drew his bow, as the Hebrew expresses it, in his simplicity; that is to say without aiming at any one man in particular, and he struck the king of Israel at the point where his iron breastplate joined the hanging skirt, which covered the lower part of his body. Ahab knew at once that the wound was mortal, but, that he might not dishearten his soldiers, he, with the help of his armour-bearer, stiffened himself into an upright posture before the advancing Syrians, while his ebbing-life blood gradually filled the hollow of the chariot in which he rode. Towards sunset the truth became known throughout the army of Israel; then the cry went forth—the solemn cry—"Every man to his city, and every man to his land." The royal chariot returned to Samaria, but the king whom it bore had ceased to breathe, and it was noted how, when they washed the chariot in the public pool or conduit at Samaria, the dogs licked up the blood of the murderer of Naboth, at the scene and under the circumstances foretold by Elijah.

The character of Ahab's mind at this, the last crisis of his sad and eventful life is seen in two respects;—in his willingness to consult the prophets of the calves — in his prejudice against Micaiah. They are the two sides of a disposition towards Religion, which, in its principle, is fundamentally one and the same—a disposition which was exhibited in all its main features by Saul, the first king of the chosen people. It is not downright contemptuous, bitter opposition; still less is it

the loyalty of faith and love. It is a willingness to welcome Religion, if Religion will only sanction the projects, the views, the passions, the characters, of its patrons. Ahab anticipated, to a certain extent, the ideas of writers such as Hobbes and Malmesbury; writers who have been convinced that Religion is a great power in human life and history—that it can be made useful in winning the minds of men to the political measures which are resolved upon by earthly governments—in making the process of government easier by reinforcing it with something like a supernatural lustre in the eyes of the multitude. Ahab had no notion of seeking the Will of God for himself, with the simple intention of obeying it. He welcomed the four hundred, because he knew beforehand exactly what the four hundred would say. He knew that they were his creatures; he knew that they were not in a position to give him honestly independent advice at this most critical juncture—that in fact they would simply echo in religious language, a conclusion at which he himself had before arrived on grounds of political expediency. He followed not them, but himself. He disobeyed a voice which he could not silence—which, willingly, he would not have heard. He knew that Micaiah was an independent adviser, but he did not want to be told unwelcome truths, even in a matter of life and death. He took his own way, and his tragical end was the consequence of his doing so.

Let us learn, hence, two lessons; and first, an important principle of Church polity—the importance of making religious teachers, if you can, independent of those whom they have to teach. The question, my brethren, is a very practical one. When a new parochial district, for instance, is being laid out, and an income has to be provided for the proposed incumbent. Why, it is asked, should there be any endowment? Why cannot a modern clergyman subsist upon the voluntary offerings of his flock, as the Apostles did before him? My brethren, I do not deny that many men can do so; that, in all ages of the Church, you will find those who inherit, along with the apostolic commission the apostolic spirit in all its fulness—men who, in St. Paul's exact sense have learnt in whatsoever state they are therewith to be content. But these are, generally speaking, men who, for the better doing of their Master's work, refuse to embarrass themselves with the cares of a family, and have no one's support to provide for as a matter of strict duty but their own. But if you my brethren of the laity, resolve—and there are grave reasons to justify your resolution—if you resolve that the mass of your clergy shall be married men, you must make up your minds either to make them independent, or to surround yourselves too often, and too certainly, with the echoes of your own inclinations

and wishes with the four hundred prophets of the calves. The clergyman, who with a number of children depending upon him, has to think from the first day of the year, about the collection which will be made for him at the end of it, must be heroic indeed if he never yields to the temptation of softening down a truth which is unwelcome to his paymasters, or extenuating a fault which is notoriously popular among them. There are, of course, some of the laity in every generation who would rather have it so. They do not, they say, like too much independence on the part of clergy. They do not want prophets of God, but exponents of their own tastes and opinions. They prefer Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, with his magnificient compliments—with his horns of iron—to Micaiah the son of Imlah, with his simple capacity saying nothing but the truth. They fear that an independent clergy will abuse their independence; and it is, of course, impossible to deny, that at particular periods of church history and in particular countries, this has been the case on a considerable scale. The clergy, are of course not perfect—not infallible. They are not exempt from the temptation to abuse their trust; but a man goes much more against the instincts of a healthy conscience, if he abuses it in the interests of a professional, or of a class ambition, than if he abuses it that he may feed and clothe those who are nearest and dearest to him. It is the laity who suffer most—much more by a dependent clergy, than do the clergy themselves. The wounds which may be left in a clerical conscience, when Truth has been concealed, or sin palliated for the sake of daily bread, are terribly avenged by the self-inflicted moral and spiritual degradation of a Christian community, which voluntarily can seek in its religious teachers—not the best that it can learn the Will of the All Holy, uttered in all its integrity with a fearless independence—but the mere reflection in religious language, of its own shortsightedness, of its own worldliness,—in a word,—of its own resolution to go up, come what may, to Ramoth-gilead.

See too, here, a lesson of religious practice. They who do not seek false teachers may yet take only so much of the true teaching as falls in with their own lower inclinations. And this is another form of the error of Ahab. They do not go so far as to consult the prophets of the calves, but they have no inclination to listen to all that Micaiah, the son of Imlah, has to say to them. This may be seen in the way in which many men read the Bible. It is not merely that they have, as the phrase is, their "favourite books" and their "favourite chapters." That is intelligible, because God may most assuredly attract one soul through this part of His revelation, and another

soul through another. But it is that they take no heed of the rest, while it is probable that the very portions which they never read, or which they are imprudent enough to deem of inferior, or of no importance, may be the very portions of the Bible which their particular characters need the most. They study the Sermon on the Mount; they have nothing to say to the Epistles of St. Paul. Or they study a few chapters in the Romans and Galatians; they never read, and do not like St. James. Or they do not see the use of the historical books of the Old Testament, or the enthusiasms of the Psalter, or the visions of Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse. It seems a slavery to them to follow, day by day, the settled order of the Church Lessons; and yet, if they would do this, they would be in a fair way to get at the whole counsel of God, as set before them in His Holy Word, as they would almost go through the whole of the Old Testament once, and the New Testament twice, in the course of a year, and would not be in danger of omitting those parts of the Sacred Volume, which, though not quite so agreeable are not on that account the less useful to themselves. In the same way, men have their favourite duties, the performance of which as they think without saying so relieves them from the performance of the rest. They would on no account break the eighth commandment or the sixth: they are less careful about the seventh and the ninth. They are alive to the importance of charity: they do not attach much value to daily prayer. They practise the social virtues: they care little about the personal virtues. They are careful to be kindly and generous in small matters: they see no harm in being grasping, even to the very verge of dishonesty, in great ones. They pay their debts regularly, but they neglect the Holy Communion. They have books, they have prophets of their own which put the Divine Will before them in a manner which consults their predilections. And in the same way men have their favourite doctrines. Micaiah may preach of the Divine benevolence, but he must say very little about Divine justice. He may show the social advantages of Christianity; he had better say but little of its mysteries. He may enlarge on the blessings of accepting Redemption: he must say nothing of the consequence of rejecting it. If God, in short, will only say what His creature approves of, His creature will be content. But if the Gospel or Creed, like Micaiah's message of old, has its "warning clauses," so much the worse for Creed or Gospel, when Ahab is sitting on his throne at the gate of Samaria, and has made up his mind, come what may, to go up to Ramoth-gilead.

Brethren, our first work in our souls—the work upon which

everything else depends—is to be true. To seek to know ourselves, indeed, as we are, and God, so far we can, as He is. To distrust all that, as we think, merely reflects our own wishes, to make the most of all that speaks fearlessly of and for God, about God, about ourselves. To determine that we will not less prize a knowledge of this kind because it humbles, because it disappoints, because it pains and checks us in a thousand ways, for this knowledge is the very first step in the road to Calvary, which is the road to Paradise. To stifle, to mutilate, to debauch if we could do so, the accents of the Divine Voice, is but to seal our own death-warrant. We have nothing to fear from the humiliations that the true standard of the Gospel may—nay, must—inflict upon our guilty consciences, because we may rise out of, and by, these very humiliations, up to that Cross which saves us from them.

In the last contest with Death, which is before each one of us, like the dying Ahab sinking down into his chariot, we shall think cheaply enough of the four hundred prophets who have charmed us here through life by a thousand organs of Opinion: we shall know that after all, He who spoke by Micaiah was surely right. May He grant that in those solemn moments this knowledge may not have come too late,—that we may be stayed on the Hands that were pierced for our salvation,—that we may know Him Whom we have, at whatever cost, believed, as the Eternal reward of a faith which will then be melting into sight!